

MEMOIRS
OF THE
MONTAGUE FAMILY.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOLUME THE THIRD.

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MEMOIRS

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CHAP. I.

MRS. MONTAGUE, finding her efforts fruitless to prevail on her daughter to resign Sir Townly Beauchamp, now exerted all her influence with her husband to induce him to consent to their union ; representing how much better it was, since Fanny was inflexible, to prevent her rendering the marriage disgraceful, by having the ceremony performed in open and avowed contempt of his authority and prohibition. Sir Townly, she added, was a man of family ; his estate large and entailed ; and, though the last man on earth she would have selected for her daughter, yet, since he had become so decidedly her choice, that no entreaties or arguments could avail to turn her from her purpose, it would be better, for

the sake of appearances to permit Fanny to reside under their protection till placed under that of her husband, than to allow her to render herself and family a topic of public conversation by taking any violent step to assert her independence. She also urged him, in consideration of Anna's welfare, to employ his lawyer in drawing up proper settlements; and concluded by entreaties, that he would allow her wishes to have some influence with him, as, however Fanny had offended her, yet, convinced that she was principally actuated by a weak attachment to a man who had infatuated her understanding, she still felt the strongest maternal anxiety for her welfare.

These arguments, Charles, at his mother's desire, and prompted by affection to Anna, enforced by his persuasions and advice; Mr. Montague, unable to devise any better plan, unwilling to have his family exposed, or, in any respect, to injure a daughter who had never offended him, after a violent struggle with his feelings, desired his lawyer to enter on the business with Sir Townly, and consented to permit Fanny to reside under her mother's pro-

tection till she was married ; but absolutely refused any farther interference.

In consequence of this arrangement, Fanny again made her appearance among her family ; but, though she had recovered her temper, from having gained her point, and was well disposed to address her father and brother in her usual manner, mingled, indeed, with no little triumph at having so wholly defeated both, she was compelled to observe silence, as neither of them took the slightest notice of her being present. Mr. Montague, felt a degree of disgust, and Charles, of anger, which neither tried to disguise ; while Mrs. Montague, melted by her fondling caresses, now as liberally bestowed, as her former insolent reproaches and defiance of her wishes, forgot all her ill conduct ; and was only restrained from treating her with her former tenderness by a fear of offending her husband and son.

To Sidney and Anna, Fanny behaved with her usual malevolence, or rather with greater, from their not having taken more pains to humour and assist her in what she called her unmerited persecutions ; but, knowing it could not

now be very lasting, and feeling no desire to create unnecessary dissension, they did not appear to notice it.

Sir Townly Beauchamp, extremely anxious to have it believed in the world, that his intended alliance with the Montague family had not met with more than a slight degree of opposition, now used his utmost exertions, through Fanny, whose conduct, through the whole affair, he and Mrs. Talbot had guided, and, through all his own friends, to induce Mrs. Montague to prevail on her husband to permit his visits at Merrion Square ; and to treat him outwardly, at least, as his future son-in-law : to do this, Mr. Montague felt the strongest repugnance ; but, unable to avoid it without rendering his family a subject of public animadversion, and wishing, since he had yielded thus far, to gloss over the affair as much as possible to the world, he at length consented to an interview with Sir Townly, who behaved to him with obsequious deference and attention, though his manner was haughty and repulsive even to rudeness ; and Sir Townly, from thenceforward, became an occasional,

though most unwelcome visitor. Fanny, at his desire, and in compliance with her mother's entreaties, though apparently from her own wish, prevailed on herself to condescend so far as to write a letter to her father, apologizing for her late conduct, and attributing it entirely to her unconquerable love for her dear Sir Townly. Though Mr. Montague neither could feel nor affect forgiveness, he yet, at Mrs. Montague's entreaties, consented to speak to her, though never addressing her, unless when compelled by necessity, and always as if she were a stranger.

Charles, also, so far consented to oblige his mother, as to speak to Fanny, though without entering into any sort of explanation, and oftener than possible, even seeing her; but he continued inexorable with respect to Sir Townly, taking care never to be at home when he was expected, and giving his servant positive directions never to suffer him to enter the house when he was there. So little of his time did he now spend at Merrion Square, that Sir Townly, however anxious for the meeting, found it impossible to elude his vigi-

lance, or his servants' strict obedience to his orders.

Apparent peace being thus restored, Sidney had leisure to reflect on her own affairs, and never had they, except when under the apprehension of being forced into a marriage she abhorred, worn a more melancholy aspect. Mr. Montague's mind, too much occupied, by his own harassing and distressing family concerns, to pay that attention to her law-suit, he had hitherto done, the same active measures were not pursued to oppose and counteract the vigorous proceedings of the Hamilton family ; and, in an accidental interview with Counsellor Walsh, now her leading Counsel, she learned that young Hamilton had every chance of establishing the deed, as no trace could yet be discovered of her great-grandfather's will, and as it could not be ascertained in what year he died. The agent also, who had been intrusted with her late uncle Forbes's papers, and who could alone give the necessary information, had gone to the West Indies, to settle some private affairs of his own ; and, till his return, nothing farther could be done. If her grand-

father's will could be recovered, it might clear up the affair of the deed, which those, most conversant in the business, considered as a forgery, or at least, as fraudulently obtained ; for it was well known her uncle Forbes had always declared his disbelief that such a deed existed, and had expressed violent resentment to the late Mr. Hamilton and his lady for endeavouring to prevail on his father to make a settlement in their favour, to the exclusion of his children, if he had married ; and that resentment for the attempt had principally induced him to bequeath his fortune to her mother.

Disinterested as Sidney was, and attaching but little importance to the possession of wealth, yet her understanding was too good, her knowledge of the world too greatly enlarged, and her disposition too far removed from anything bordering on folly or romance, to be insensible to the blessings of independence, and not to shudder at the prospect of owing all the comfort of her future life, even to the kind and generous Charles. However well disposed he might be to consider her as a sister, could she even have reconciled herself to

the idea of living nearly a dependant on his bounty, yet many circumstances, particularly that of his marriage, might render his house neither proper, nor pleasant for her to reside in; and though while her uncle lived with him, she might hope ever to find a steady and a warm friend, yet many late events had served to convince her that implicit confidence is not to be placed in man: even his kindness had been warped, and, though not perhaps in the same way, it might again suffer a change or diminution.

This apprehension, however rational, was yet feeble and trifling, when compared with the anguish she endured at the conviction, that on the recovery of her fortune alone, depended her future union with Sedley, the only hope which had hitherto served to sooth their painful separation: generous and disinterested as she believed Sedley's disposition, ardent as was the attachment she could not doubt he felt for her, yet, if her uncle had expressed such displeasure at the idea of an union between her and his son, how could she expect to meet another family more disinterested than her

own ; and however, her uncle's kindness and subsequent unhappiness had obliterated every feeling of resentment towards him from her heart, the whole transaction had made an indelible impression on her mind, had given a deep and lasting wound to her pride, and determined her, if deprived of her fortune, never to enter any family that might consider a connexion with her in a mercenary point of view.

" Is such then indeed," she mentally exclaimed, " my situation ? was all the adulation I received in my father's life-time, paid to my fortune alone, or what was then so considered ; since such is the opinion—such the feelings of the world, that the loss of wealth renders every other consideration of comparative indifference—since even my uncle, though so enraged at old Mr. Sedley's rejection of me, as a daughter, could feel similar reluctance to receive me in such a character, I must only contract my views to my situation, and resigning every hope of happiness, endeavour to attain fortitude to tread with patience and resignation the path Providence has, for wise purposes, allotted me." Thus, wounded alike in heart and pride,

the momentary energy, which her exertions to serve Mrs. Montague, and the unusual scenes exhibited in her uncle's family, had excited, sunk into deep despondency. Looking to no brighter prospect than an early grave for happiness, she derived no pleasure from the amusements that courted her, and the fever on her spirits, returning with additional severity, deeply, though imperceptibly, preyed on her health and constitution.

CHAP. II.

SIR TOWNLY BEAUCHAMP, having succeeded in the plan he had so artfully and assiduously laboured, of obtaining Fanny's consent to their union ; and having that consent, in appearance, at least, ratified by her friends, hurried on the settlements with such rapidity, that in a very few days rough draughts of them were sent to Merrion-square for Fanny's inspection. Counsellor Walsh, who attended on the occasion to give his advice, informed her that he could obtain no other terms from Sir Townly, than the jointure enjoyed by the late Lady Beauchamp with 1000*l.* per annum, pin-money ; for Sir Townly declared he could not settle any part of her fortune on herself, as Mr. Montague had positively refused to advance the 5000*l.* lying on his estate, though he would settle it by will, as he was empowered to do, either on his daughter or any children she might have.

He at the same time, gave it as his opinion, that such settlements were inadequate to her fortune and concurred with Mr. Montague's advice, though by his desire, not giving it as such, positively to reject them.

Fanny, immeasurably piqued at what she justly considered a great failure in that violent love which Sir Townly had persuaded her was his only motive for seeking the connexion, declared her resolution of following Mr. Walsh's advice ; saying, if Sir Townly was guided by any mercenary motives, and would act so ungenerously with his splendid, and as he had taught her to believe unincumbered fortune, she was determin'd to take her papa's advice and give him an absolute dismissal.

Mr. Walsh, extremely pleased at the success of his mission, as Mr. Montague had not concealed from him how much he disliked his daughter's intended marriage, after informing him of the result, hastened to apprise Sir Townly of her determination.

The hope of Fanny's being at length induced to renounce a connexion so deservedly abhorrent to him, gave Mr. Montague some

pleasure, though it by no means lessened his deep resentment to his daughter, who had shewn no intention to oblige or gratify him till instigated by the same motives that had prompted her former defiance of his authority and wishes, a determination to consult her own will, and to make herself an object of paramount consequence.

Sir Townly, equally alarmed and enraged at an objection he had not expected from Fanny, after having taken more pains to flatter and cajole her to his purpose than, had he not been urged by all-powerful necessity, he would have deemed sufficiently recompensed by the possession of a kingdom, was at first irresolute how to act; but the conviction that his estate would not be more than a few months longer in his own possession, as his creditors were only withheld from taking the rents out of his hands by promises of being paid their demands immediately on his marriage with the wealthy Miss Montague, whose fortune, as usual, on such occasions was more than doubled, determined him not to lose the prize, when so nearly won. He therefore solicited a private interview

with Fanny, and expressed unbounded regret at her having been induced to form an opinion that he could deny her even half the world, if in his possession : assuring her, and so far he was right, that the strictest limitations had been set on his giving any other jointure than such as his mother had enjoyed: and bewailing his inability to support that splendor he thought so indispensably her due, if not allowed the full command of her fortune. In short, Fanny, though so ready to suspect treachery, selfishness, and duplicity, where none was intended, was devoid of penetration, where the grossest was practised ; and after indulging in a full display of heroic, love-like, and lady-like airs, concluded the conference by agreeing to marry her dear Sir Townly on the only terms he could propose, and which a view to her happiness and to support her in that splendor to which he considered her entitled, had alone induced him to offer.

A transient feeling of pity he could not repress, at seeing his daughter, however unworthy of his tenderness, become so wretched a dupe to this designing and profligate man, in-

duced Mr. Montague to make a last effort to preserve her from destruction; and in cold, though expressive terms, he endeavoured to undeceive and convince her Sir Townly was wilfully imposing on her inexperience. Fanny, more offended by this impeachment of her superior sense and judgment, than grateful for his undeserved exertion of parental care, replied so pettishly to his arguments, and so triumphantly declared her perfect confidence in Sir Townly's honour and affection, that Mr. Montague was compelled to yield the point. Finding her as deaf to the voice of reason as she had been to that of duty or propriety, he suffered her without any farther struggle to encounter the fate she was so obstinately determined to embrace, feeling not less contempt for her perverse folly than displeasure at her want of duty and affection. Though no entreaties could induce him to alter his determination of withholding the 5000*l.* she was entitled to receive as a younger child, he allowed her to settle all the rest as she thought proper; no farther interfering than by requesting Mr. Walsh would have the deed duly executed and

registered, and thus secure to Fanny whatever Sir Townly felt himself called on to give her ; never once suspecting, however averse to the union, that Sir Townly, so far from being enabled to give the 1000*l.* per annum he had held out as a lure, could not, in the present state of his affairs, command half that sum for himself. As Sir Townly's debts had been contracted in England, and with his own agent, very little was known of his affairs ; nor had they, but his profligate character, been Mr. Montague's objection, for into them he had never inquired till brought into such a situation that his inquiries were rendered totally useless, by its being the interest of the creditors themselves to deceive him, and by Fanny's determination to act for herself.

All law matters being at length arranged, Sir Townly became very urgent with Fanny to fix the day for their nuptials, pressing so earnestly for an early one, that, to oblige him, she named the third of April, not more than a fortnight distant. As Mrs. Talbot had used every artifice to gloss over the part she had acted in the affair, and as both she and Sir

Townly took the utmost pains to please and conciliate Mrs. Montague, they at length succeeded in reconciling her to a marriage, she had at first so greatly disliked. At her entreaty, Mr. Montague consented to permit a renewal of Mrs. Talbot's visits, which he did not now consider it of any consequence to prohibit, though determined to break off all farther connexion between her and the remainder of his family, more than ceremony demanded; and resolved that no other child of his should fall a sacrifice to her arts.

In the bustle of preparations for her wedding, ordering new dresses, selecting ornaments, and making every arrangement her capricious fancy directed, Fanny experienced all the happiness she was capable of feeling, in no degree imbibited by the conviction that she had for ever forfeited the confidence and affection of her father and brother—more inclined, indeed to resent than bewail the estrangement of both.

Mrs. Montague determining to give a splendid ball for the purpose of announcing to the world her daughter's intended union, sent cards

to Mrs. Talbot and several others of Sir Townly's near connexions, all persons of rank : and Mr. Montague resolved since he had so far conquered his resentment, for the sake of propriety and of his family, as to disguise his feelings from the world, not to oppose her wishes, however disagreeable to himself.

On learning this arrangement, Charles declared his positive resolution of absenting himself on the occasion, nor could all his mother's entreaties, induce him to alter this determination, till Mr. Montague at length interfered, and said, since he had sacrificed so much for the sake of his family, and to preserve it as far as possible from disgrace, he thought his son should in consideration of his wishes, make a similar sacrifice. Charles was ultimately persuaded to give a reluctant consent to attend, but he declared that only as a stranger should he treat and consider Sir Townly Beauchamp. From adhering to this resolution, Mr. Montague made no effort to dissuade him ; though, had not Mrs. Montague been convinced the attempt would merely give her useless vexation, she would not have so quietly acquiesced in a

determination that she considered as a slight to Fanny ; but, disliking to harrass and offend so beloved a son, she endeavoured to appear satisfied, and even gratified by the only concession he could be induced to make.

On the evening fixed on for this party, therefore, the whole family assembled to receive their expected guests, and while triumph and exultation sat on Fanny's brow, Mr. Montague's and his son's were clouded with an expression of anger and disgust, very unlike the animation and good humour that in general so peculiarly marked their countenance.

The first visitors who appeared were Mrs. Talbot and Sir Townly, who paid their compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Montague, with all that fashionable ease and complimentary politeness each so well knew how to assume, and which were received by Mr. Montague with cool and distant reserve.

Sir Townly then advancing to Charles, who was sitting conversing with Sidney and Anna without appearing to perceive his entrance, expressed his pleasure in at length having the happiness of seeing him, declaring how gratified

and honoured he felt at the prospect of being so soon and so nearly connected with him.

“With my sentiments, Sir,” cried Charles haughtily, and without deigning to notice Sir Townly’s offered hand; “you are already so well acquainted, that it is superfluous for me to repeat them; politeness, I am, for the sake of propriety, content to observe; but nothing further need you ever expect from me.”

It required all Sir Townly’s long and perfect initiation in the arts of hypocrisy to restrain an expression of the rage he felt at this repulse, and all his native insolence and unblushing effrontery, to enable him to meet it without appearing overwhelmed with either shame or anger—but, insensible to the one and disguising the other, he turned on his heel, saying with a laugh that struggled between derision and an affectation of good humour, when Mr. Montague knew him better, he would alter the opinion he had formed of his character.

Then, as if suddenly recollecting he had not quite acted his part, he returned, and addressing Sidney and Anna in nearly similar terms;

expressed his pleasure at the prospect of being so soon united to their family; both bowed, but afraid to offend Charles, they made no reply; and Sir Townly, perceiving how unavailing were his efforts to ingratiate himself with any member of the family, except Mrs. Montague, took a seat between her and Fanny, and directed his attention and conversation almost equally to both.

Mrs. Talbot advancing to Charles and the girls, poured forth a profusion of her usual flimsy and insincere compliments on the happiness she experienced at her brother's approaching union with a family who held the first place in her friendship and esteem.

Charles bowed, and made no reply, but Sidney and Anna, coldly returned her congratulations; when Mrs. Talbot, with less displeasure, though more indifference, turned from them as her brother had done, and after vainly endeavouring to engage Mr. Montague in a friendly conversation, she was forced to take refuge with Miss Watkins, till the entrance of some of the other guests relieved her from a situation, that however accustomed to disguise

her feelings, she could not avoid finding irksome.

Among the next set that made their appearance was Mr. Savage, who soon joined Charles, Sidney, and Anna, and after conversing with them some moments on general subjects, addressing Charles, and directing his eyes to Fanny and Sir Townly Beauchamp, said, "Am I to offer my congratulations, Montague—am I to take present appearances as a confirmation of the reports I have heard circulated?"

" You may take them in any sense you think most likely to prove the proper one," cried Charles pettishly; " but, as to congratulations, I must beg leave to be excused hearing any, as my opinion of Sir Townly Beauchamp has undergone no alteration from that you well know I formed of him, at the commencement of our acquaintance ; and though he is to be married to my sister, I can assure you, as a brother, I never will consider him ; this, however, I tell you in confidence, as I should not, from private considerations choose to have the world altogether as well acquainted with my sentiments.

A feeling of offended pride, which had tinged Mr. Savage's cheeks with scarlet, at the abruptness of Charles's manner, the conclusion of this speech eradicated, and with affectionate kindness, he replied, "Had you earlier intrusted me with your sentiments on this subject, my dear Montague, I would have avoided any observation that could in the most remote degree have wounded your feelings; what they must be, I can well conjecture, and shall not enter on the subject."

Then starting others of general entertainment, he took so much pains to enliven young Montague, that he at length succeeded in restoring him to something like his usual animation.

About half past ten o'clock, Fanny opened the ball with Sir Townly Beauchamp, leading off, "The Triumph," with all the exultation of weak and flattered vanity.

As Mr. Savage was peculiarly careful to avoid any public display of attention to Sidney, he asked Anna for the first set, but the former engaged for the second; equally careless with whom she performed the part

she was compelled to act in public, she readily accepted him, feeling no interest, though some surprise, at the late variableness of his manner and the cautious guard he seemed to think it necessary to keep over his actions. For this she could in no other way account, than by supposing he feared that he had been too particular in his attention at the period of Mr. Ingram's addresses, and now wished to guard his honour from the impeachment, of having led her to suppose he had formed wishes and expectations in his own favour, which his present conduct was calculated to convince her he had not. Though piqued at his believing her so ready to become the dupe of vanity in which she had never indulged, she could not severely condemn caution, which, however offensive, certainly originated in feelings of true delicacy, though somewhat tinctured by that pride and the idea of his own importance, which she had early discovered to be leading traits in his character.

Overpowered by the heat of the room, crowded to such an excess, that scarcely would the railing secure the dancers from being in-

impeded in their progress by the numerous spectators, immediately on the conclusion of the second dance, Sidney, growing very faint, looked round in search of Charles to assist her in getting through the crowd, feeling averse to apply to Mr. Savage, who was talking to a young lady standing near them.

Unable to discern Charles, the apprehension of being overcome induced her to make a sudden exertion to quit the room ; but as politeness was not the code of fashionable young men, so far from thinking themselves called on to offer her the slightest assistance, they pushed so rudely past her, that she had not succeeded in getting more than a few paces from the spot where she had left Mr. Savage when he joined her ; and perceiving, by her extreme pallor, that she was ill, he took her hand without speaking, and, drawing it through his arm, forced his way with as little ceremony as any other of the fashionable young men could have deemed necessary, and soon gained the passage, when, in a voice of softness and emotion, he exclaimed, “ Why would you quit me so abruptly, without apprizing me of your illness ? ”

It must be the intolerable heat of the rooms that has overpowered you ; will you allow me to conduct you to some of the lower ones, where you will at least be permitted to breathe fresh air ?”

Sidney, observing that the stairs leading to those apartments were crowded with young men, lounging, laughing, and desirous to entertain themselves in any way rather than by joining in the amusement they had been purposely invited to promote, gratefully accepted Mr. Savage’s offer, and, with his assistance, soon reached one of the lower rooms, where the servants were employed in arranging supper.

Mr. Savage, surprised into acting from nature, with warm and impassioned eagerness pressed Sidney to name what she thought would be most likely to restore her, and, which he would instantly procure.

Obliged by his attention, though rather embarrassed by his manner, Sidney, feeling revived by the fresh air, thanked him for his kindness, and, declaring herself perfectly recovered, proposed returning up stairs.

“ You had better not return yet,” exclaimed

he eagerly ; “ you had much better remain here for some time longer; the heat of the rooms above is so oppressive, I fear you will not be able to encounter it.”*

“ I believe,” said Sidney, forcing a smile, “ I am not perfectly fitted for the life of dissipation I have latterly led. I shall feel most happy when we return to Belle Vue.”

“ Do you think of returning soon ?” cried Mr. Savage, with an instant change of countenance ; “ I had no idea Mr. Montague intended leaving town till June.”

“ I cannot positively say,” replied she ; “ but I understand my uncle wishes to return to Belle Vue about the middle of May : Fanny’s marriage, as perhaps you already know, is settled to take place in April.”

“ I heard it was settled, but not the precise time ; and with what surprise I did hear it you may conjecture from what I believe you heard me mention at the time of Montague’s illness : but why are you so anxious to deprive our fashionable circles of one whose acknowledged superiority of beauty and accomplishments are her least claims to distinction ?

Sidney, surprised and abashed at a compliment such as she had never before received from Mr. Savage or indeed from any man of whose understanding she had formed a very high opinion, (as, though well accustomed to be told she was divinely beautiful, yet, by Sedley, the only man on whose praises or compliments she had ever set the slightest value, her beauty was a theme he had scarcely ever even accidentally touched on,) was for some moments at a loss how to reply : then, saying with a laugh, Mr. Savage gave her credit for more vanity than he would find her to possess, again proposed going up stairs. Rising from her seat, and advancing towards the door, Mr. Savage was unavoidably compelled to follow her ; but, the moment he got out of hearing of the servants, he with great energy exclaimed, “ Why should you suppose the simple expression of my own feelings is intended as an accusation of vanity to you ? It may, perhaps, seem a strange declaration to make ; but, in my life, I never met a woman so wholly devoid of vanity, and who appears on every occasion to act so entirely from the genuine impulse of her own heart and feel-”

"I am sorry," cried Sidney, "that you appear to think sincerity a virtue so little inherent in our sex, that you should consider it strange to make such an avowal."

"I do not, I will frankly confess," replied he, smiling, though in some confusion, "think it a virtue they seem in general inclined to place much value on, either in themselves or others, though one I should prize beyond every other qualification. Do not then be offended if, with similar frankness, I avow, that, except yourself, and your cousin Anna Montague, I have never yet met a woman in the fashionable circles whom I believed to have either acted or spoken as nature and their own feelings directed. This to you may seem harsh; but to me, who have so accurately observed the characters, or assumed characters, of women of the world, it appears only a specimen of that candour I profess to admire."

An involuntary sigh escaped from Sidney, excited by the recollection of Sedley, whom this declaration so powerfully recalled to her remembrance, and of how much he too had admired sincerity and candour; but, checking her

feelings, she forced a faint smile, and said, “ I know not, Mr. Savage, whether I ought to quarrel with you for the contemptuous opinion you have so openly avowed of my sex in general, at least of the fashionable part of it, or to thank you for the peculiar and exclusive compliment you pay to myself and Anna. I cannot say, however, I feel much inclined to do either, as I am unable to enter into any defence of those with whom I am but very imperfectly acquainted, nor much flattered by what I should hope, to believe severe, though I cannot venture to say I think it is wholly undeserved.”

Mr. Savage coloured at this speech, and was for a moment silent; then, with some embarrassment, replied, “ I do not often speak my sentiments so openly, as I am well aware they must subject me to a very great degree of censure; though I have been too long conversant in fashionable life to think I have spoken with undeserved severity; yet surely you cannot suppose I have uttered them with any design to offend one whose good opinion I value beyond that of any other being the whole world contains; one whose every thought and action

convinces me that I have at length discovered the gem I so long believed excluded from the circles in which she moves.

Surprised and confounded at so direct an avowal of sentiments she had never for a moment believed Mr. Savage had indulged, Sidney blushed excessively ; but, as they had reached the head of the stairs, and were again surrounded by a crowd of people, she made no other reply than by a bow. But she felt alarmed at perceiving that Mr. Savage appeared to draw the most favourable inferences from the observation of her confusion, and continu'd to regard and address her with a mingled expression of delighted tenderness, and all the exultation of gratified vanity. Though she treated him with a greater degree of reserve than she had ever before assumed, it failed of having the desired effect ; Mr. Savage seeming to consider, that if he could in his own heart feel satisfied that she had no design of attracting his attention from the splendid settlements he was enabled to offer, he could not a moment doubt that she would remain insensible to the advantages of person, talents, and situation, which he indisputably

possessed, and which he rated as high as any woman he suspected of wishing to engross them.

An opinion his knowledge of the world had too well justified him in forming, that few or none of the women who flutter in fashionable circles, had any other end in view than to secure themselves eligible settlements, had long influenced Mr. Savage's actions ; and, concluding himself safe from attractions he considered as mere baits to attain this purpose, he felt no desire of avoiding the society of any woman, however young, beautiful, or apparently amiable, certain that his conviction of their internal motives for assuming the characters in which they appeared would infallibly secure his heart from falling a victim to their charms, however dazzling or attractive ; and though, on his first introduction to the Montague family, he had formed the opinion that Anna's careless gaiety and the soft gentleness and melancholy sweetness of Sidney's manners were merely assumed as good foils to each other, he felt no hesitation in cultivating their society. One amused, the other interested him ; but neither, did he fear, would one moment engage his affections.

more than a similar performance on the stage, but as he was not yet arrived at a period of life to view with such stoical indifference even the appearance of what is amiable, he could not avoid feeling some little degree of interest mingle in the pleasure that Sidney's society afforded him; and he was insensibly led to watch her every look and action with a degree of accuracy that soon convinced him her character was perfectly natural, that her manners had been formed by an early association with good company, and her understanding improved by the best education. Yet, such was the hold an apprehension of being taken in to marry a woman who would value him solely for the advantages of his situation had taken of his imagination, that, though excessively anxious to volunteer his services to rid her of Mr. Ingrim's addresses (and all the warmth and generosity of his heart awakened by observing her melancholy and dejection; which he attributed to her not being happily situated uncle's family) he could not resolve to make such advances as would commit him, or suffer his honour to be questioned, should he discover

any trait of artifice that might induce a wish to recede. Thus, though hovering continually near her, and ardently desiring to secure her heart, his conduct was precisely calculated to wound her feelings if her affections had been disengaged at the period of their acquaintance, and ready to bestow, as they might then naturally have been, on himself ; and, as that was not the case, to inflict a wound on her pride by inducing her to think he had formed the opinion that she had encouraged hopes he had never intended to authorize. In this fluctuation, between a desire of recommending and a fear of committing himself, he had that evening entered the room ; when concluding her leaving him without applying for his assistance had been the mere effect of pique at observing his attention apparently engaged by another, and encouraging the hope his vanity so quickly whispered that her illness might also have been the effect of agitation, he no longer felt a wish to disguise his sentiments ; frankly avowing his opinion of fashionable females in general, as an excuse for his own conduct ; and attributing her's, after such an avowal, wholly

to the surprise and pleasure she experienced and which the endeavour to disguise made her assume a degree of reserve which might have offended and alarmed a man less certain of his own powers of attraction. As, amidst all Savage's vanity, he possessed generosity, and valued not wealth when placed in competition with such a heart as he believed her to possess, he felt a proud gratification in the conviction that he was enabled to bestow all that happiness which wealth could add to mutual affection ; and indulged a haughty triumph that the woman he had, after mature deliberation, selected, was so circumstanced as to be convinced he chose her for herself alone, and must therefore feel redoubled tenderness and gratitude for such a choice.

Equally hurt and offended by Mr. Savage's manner, which she knew not how to interpret, Sidney felt excessively relieved when the general-breaking-up of the party permitted her to retire to her own room, and reflect at leisure on the whole of his conduct. The more minutely she retraced his behaviour, from the period of their first acquaintance, the more certain she

became that the inconsistency of his manner had originated in the embarrassed state of her fortune, which induced him thus continually to vibrate between love and prudence, and, though indifferent to his feelings or opinion, farther than the generous wish that for her no human being should breathe an unrequited sigh, yet it powerfully recalled the recollection of Sedley, and of how different had been his conduct under nearly similar circumstances, avowing equal distrust of fashionable women, or rather relating a circumstance that justified, at least, equal caution to preserve himself from being a second time duped. No watchful caution, no wavering in his sentiments respecting her situation, had, even for a moment, influenced his actions : his feelings, his wishes and his admiration he had ever frankly acknowledged ; and, though a jealous sensibility of disposition, powerfully excited, by having once nearly fallen the victim of deception, had long prevented him from believing himself an object of attachment, it had never induced him to take any precaution against committing himself. From the moment he began to

flatter himself he had created even the slightest degree of sympathy in her breast, no wish had appeared half so fervently to actuate him as the desire of confessing his own feelings till forced to believe she had intentionally deceived him ; and, when once convinced how unjustly he accused her, then, with all his own energetic feeling, had he avowed every motive that had guided his conduct, and with generous, though erring warmth, sought to remove the obstacles that lay in the way of their union, till compelled, and how reluctantly compelled succeeding events had proved, to resign all hope of being enabled to accomplish his wishes. How differently had Mr. Savage acted. He had, though uncontrolled master of himself and fortune, wavered, hesitated, doubted, and watched, till at length, in an unguarded hour, he avowed his admiration ; and, considering his situation such as to place beyond a doubt any possibility of not being gladly accepted, the moment he could prevail on himself to come to a final resolution of explicitly declaring his sentiments, he had, with equal vanity and want of delicacy, seemed to consider it so improbable that he could meet with a

repulse, that no reserve she could assume had power to shake his confidence in the certainty of conquest.

"Mr. Savage," thought she, "need not have taken so much care to secure himself from the artifices of one who never had a wish to attract his attention: to think I still enjoy your esteem and affection, my dear, my generous Sedley, will support me amidst all contingent sorrows and distresses; it is a consolation I would not forfeit to share all Mr. Savage's splendour."

Soothed by the assurance, thus forcibly revived, of how fully she possessed the affections of a man whose character and sentiments rose proportionably high in her estimation on every comparison she made between him and those who even ranked highest in the estimation of the world, the sorrow their separation excited sunk for the moment in the sweet, though romantic, determination of devoting her life to cherish his remembrance; and, of never depriving herself of the solace of thinking, that she not only possessed, but deserved, all the affection even his warm and generous heart was capable of feeling.

CHAP. III.

DISLIKING extremely to hear any farther declaration of Mr. Savage's sentiments, Sidney so carefully avoided any but the most public conversation with him, that he had no farther opportunity of expressing his feelings except by indirect hints, and a degree of tender watchful attention that not only pained her generous mind, from the conviction of how wholly it was undeserved, and obliterated all the resentment she had felt at what she considered very undue arrogance, but awakened a fear of being again exposed to disagreeable contentions on the subject of his proposals, which she knew her whole family must consider as unexceptionable; and to which she could not herself have urged even a rational objection, had her heart been disengaged. This fear was increased by observing how much pleasure Charles seemed to feel at witnessing

Mr. Savage's attention ; while Anna, with careless levity, rallied her on her conquest, appearing to forget that such a person as Major Sedley existed, though his remembrance was revived with painful energy in her own breast by an occasional similarity in Mr. Savage's sentiments to his, though their general character and deportment were totally different,—Mr. Savage falling as far short of the Major in delicacy and true generosity, as he surpassed him in haughty pride, and that keen observation of the world that instinctively impresses a conviction of our claims to distinction, and a determined resolution to exact all, and even more than we can justly esteem our due, by considering as peculiarly honoured those on whom we condescend to bestow our notice and regard.

From Mr. Montague's observation she had nothing at present to fear, as his attention was too painfully occupied by the situation of his own family to bestow a thought on surrounding objects; for, amidst all his resentment to Fanny, he could not forbear lamenting the destruction to which she was so obstinately

devoting herself ; and Sidney, hoping Mr. Savage's pride would soon take the alarm, and preclude even the wish of making proposals that would not be received with the pleasure he would think necessary to the gratification of his vanity, tried to dismiss the subject entirely from her thoughts.

The morning of the third of April having arrived, the whole family were aroused at an early hour, to prepare to attend the bride to church, ten being the time appointed for the ceremony to take place ; and as Mr. Montague had, from motives of propriety, determined to be present, and prevailed on Charles also to be one of the party, no opposition was made to Sidney and Anna attending as bride's maids ; Fanny selecting them at her mother's request, who was extremely anxious the world should believe her daughter's marriage with Sir Townly Beauchamp met the full approbation of her family.

This honour Sidney would have most gladly declined ; but, unwilling to disoblige Mrs. Montague, whose request it was, she reluctantly acquiesced, and from the same motive ac-

cepted a splendid dress Mrs. Montague presented to her for the occasion, anxious to do all possible honour to her still beloved, though undeserving, daughter.

It had been agreed on between Fanny and Sir Townley Beauchamp that they should leave town immediately after the ceremony, and set out for Lord Mount Eagle's, a distant relation of Sir Townley's, who had invited them to his house to spend the honey-moon, from wishing to pay a compliment to the Montague family, and to express his own approbation of Sir Townley's marriage, and declaration of reforming his character, and renouncing his hitherto vicious pursuits. A very handsome collation was therefore laid out, of which the whole bridal party were to return and partake, previous to the new-married pair setting out for the country.

In consequence of this arrangement, the moment Sidney had swallowed a hasty breakfast she retired, with Anna, to dress, and, on her return to the drawing-room, found Charles alone, who asked her to go with him, in his curriicle, to the church; adding,

he wished her afterwards to take a drive with him in the Park.

Sidney, dreading her compliance might again revive her uncle's suspicions of an attachment subsisting between them, endeavoured to evade the proposal ; but Charles, comprehending her motives for declining his invitation, expressed such high displeasure at her refusal, though without avowing his suspicions, that, over-powered by his urgency and anger, she at length consented to oblige him. Charles, without any farther adverting to the subject, exclaimed, with great bitterness, " How sincerely do I rejoice that we have at length come to the last act of the drama, as I am heartily weary of the part I have been obliged to perform : I hope Fanny may not yet have reason to remember the title of the *Mourning Bride* ; ill as she has acted, I cannot help being anxious, for I have every reason to suppose she will have but too much cause to lament her obstinacy and ingratitude ; and all to obtain a man I cannot see in the same room with me without feeling an instantaneous desire to turn him out ; nor has all his fawning

servility induced me for one moment to credit his assertions of intending to reform, which, I understand, he has so vehemently made to my mother. His conduct on the present occasion does not auger very well of such an intention; but I know not," continued he, checking himself, " why I should feel any concern on the subject; Fanny must only encounter the fate she has brought on herself."

" I hope most earnestly," exclaimed Sidney, " it may not be so wretched as you seem to apprehend ; though I must own I should tremble at being compelled to offer my vows to such a man."

" And so will she too," cried he, " after they are irrevocably plighted; as, I understand, from very good authority, that Beauchamp has a most execrable temper ; and when, in the slightest degree, thrown off his guard, is even brutal in his rage : of this I had a specimen at the time I was myself engaged with him in that infamous attack on the watch ; but, where every effort to save or direct was merely returned by clamour and accusation, it was vain, and even degrading, to contend : yet, now that it

is all over, I cannot forbear feeling both anger and sorrow at seeing a sister of mine wilfully consign herself into the power of a man I consider as little better than an unprincipled ruffian. However, as I told her, from this day forward she will be, in my mind, an alien to the blood, as well as to the name, of Montague, and only as Lady Beauchamp will I in future regard her."

The entrance of Mr. Montague and Anna put an end to a conversation that excited in Sidney's mind a sort of involuntary horror of the ceremony she was going to witness ; and when, in a few moments, she saw Fanny enter the room splendidly attired, and every feature beaming with the exultation of gratified vanity, she could not forbear viewing her with the same emotions she would have regarded one of the self-devoted victims to Pagan superstition, decked out for the celebration of their bloody and inhuman rites.

Mrs. Montague, following her daughter into the room, accompanied by Miss Watkins, declared it was time to set out ; when Mr. Montague rising, without uttering a word, offered

her his arm, and led her down to the carriage ; Charles compelling himself to take charge of Fanny, who followed her mother with the light step of triumphant pleasure.

On their arrival at the church, they found Sir Townley already there, attended by a numerous party of his friends ; and Fanny's eyes sparkled with delight on observing his new and elegant barouche, drawn by four of the finest blood-horses, attended by a suite of servants in the richest and most splendid liveries.

Several of Mr. Montague's relations also attended, and, as far as outward magnificence could suffice to render a family satisfied, so far all wore the most promising aspect ; but the sight of Sir Townly's superb equipage, and the gay cavalcade surrounding it, tinged Mrs. Montague's and Fanny's cheeks with a glow of pleasure, and dimpled Anna's into smiles of gratified vanity. It had no effect on either Mr. Montague or his son, who mutually regarded the scene and party with the cold and haughty glance of dissatisfied reluctance at being thus compelled to bear a part in

what they so greatly disliked, and were so well known to disapprove.

Sir Townly handing Fanny from her mother's carriage, led her towards the altar, whither Mr. Montague also conducted his lady and Miss Watkins, followed by Charles, on whose arm Sidney and Anna leaned, till they reached the communion-table, when, resigning them to his mother, he retreated to a distant part of the church, and, leaning against one of the pews, seemed to regard the passing scene as one in which he was totally uninterested.

The ceremony commenced ; and, while Sidney listened with terrified awe to what she had every reason to believe would doom Fanny, if not to wretchedness, at least to unavailing regret, and repentance, Mrs. Montague became so violently agitated by all the different feelings that must, at such a moment, oppress a fond mother's heart, all the fears she had been taught to indulge respecting Sir Townly, which his late behaviour, joined to a wish to gratify Fanny, had induced her to lull, and, as far as she could, to banish, now returned with such added acuteness, that scarcely could

Mr. Montague preserve her from fainting, while his own countenance assumed the sternest expression of gloom, from mingled feelings of anger and sorrow, and an ardent desire to conceal both.

The moment the ceremony was concluded, **Mrs. Montague**, folding her daughter in her arms, in a voice hardly audible, pronounced her blessing and prayers for her future happiness ; to which Fanny listened with a degree of indifference (seeming rather offended by her grief than grateful for her affection) that soon checked the overflowings of **Mrs. Montague's** tenderness ; when **Mr. Montague**, stepping forward, coldly congratulated Sir Townley and his daughter in the same terms he would have used towards total strangers ; all the concern lie had hitherto found himself unable to repress being annihilated by Fanny's unfeeling reception of her mother's fond and lavish affection,

When the common-place congratulations usual on such occasions were over, Sir Townley missing Charles, and perceiving he had not the slightest intention of approaching or addressing them, advanced towards him, and with as-

sumed cordiality, declared his happiness at an alliance with his family, and expressing a hope that they should ever in future consider each other as brothers.

“ So far as the ceremony that has passed has made us so,” cried Charles, in a low voice, “ we are, but no farther will I ever consider myself connected with you ; nor need you, sir, on such an occasion, have forced this declaration from me, as I was otherwise perfectly ready to offer the congratulations due to Sir Townly and lady Beauchamp on their nuptials ; but which it would be now superfluous, if not awkward, to pronounce.”

Sir Townly, no longer influenced by his former powerful motives for wishing to sooth and conciliate Charles, and convinced how fruitless such an effort would prove, did not feel inclined to suppress the displeasure this reply excited, and, smiling disdainfully, replied, “ I am perfectly content, sir—Sir Townly Beauchamp can derive no honour from a connexion with Mr. Montague, nor shall he again degrade himself by making any farther effort to obtain his friendship, though he will take due

care to enforce the rights with which the law has now invested him."

" You had also better take care, sir," exclaimed Charles, while anger flashed from his eyes, " that, in spite of law or any other tie, I do not make you better recollect whom you are addressing."

The presence of so many of his relations, whom Sir Townly had requested to do honour to his nuptials, restrained him from noticing this reply otherwise than by a smile of derision, and Charles was equally withheld by a consideration of the indecency of a public quarrel in such a place, and on such an occasion; but immediately going forward, and drawing Sidney's hand through his arm, relieved both her and himself from a scene each had found extremely unpleasant, by conducting her to his curricle.

This abrupt departure, however it surprised, induced the remainder of the party to follow his example; and they all returned to Merrion-square.

Here they stayed about an hour, partaking of various refreshments; when Sir Townly

whispering to Fanny, she sent an order to her woman to have her imperial placed on the carriage, and, in a short time after, Sir Townly's barouche drove to the door, the servants and horses decked in rich silver favours, and glittering in all the splendour of bridal magnificence.

The moment of leave-taking arrived, Mrs. Montague's fortitude again gave way, and scarcely could she permit Sir Townly to take Fanny from her arms, who, insensible to her mother's fond grief, remarked, that it was wonderful she could feel so miserable when she knew that she was so happy.

Mr. Montague, offended by the whole of Fanny's conduct during the day, now interferred, requesting Mrs. Montague would no longer delay Lady Beauchamp's departure. Mrs. Montague, grieved at finding him so much displeased, suffered Fanny to leave her, who, after a cold salute from her father, and a still colder one from her brother, was conducted by Sir Townly to his barouche, who, though extremely polite to Mr. Montague, took no farther notice of Charles than by a distant bow, which was returncd by one of haughty disdain.

For some time after their departure, the party remained to offer their mingled condolences and congratulations to Mrs. Montague, who, too well accustomed to disguise her feelings from the world to suffer herself to be long overpowered in the presence of strangers, quickly recovered a tolerable share of calmness, and then received and returned the compliments paid her with all her wonted readiness and good breeding.

Her guests, on seeing her restored to an appearance of cheerfulness, eager to communicate all the bridal intelligence they had gathered, ordered their carriages and departed, their servants and horses decked in huge favours, for the purpose of driving round the town, and announcing to the fashionable world the important intelligence of the marriage of the rich Miss Montague and the celebrated Sir Townly Beauchamp.

Charles reminding Sidney of her promise to take a drive with him in the Park, she changed her bridal dress for one more suitable to the occasion, and accompanied him to his curricle.

He drove with great rapidity till they reached.

the Park ; then checking his speed, after some moments' silent deliberation, said, " I wish to have some conversation with you, Sidney, to learn your sentiments on a subject, on which I feel myself very warmly interested, and one on which I hope and expect you will not even wish to deceive me."

Sidney, surprised and involuntarily alarmed by this opening, hesitated for a moment, and then said, " whatever are my sentiments on any subject, Charles, with all the candour to which you are entitled I will avow them ; and if they are not such as may satisfy you, surely you will not feel displeasure at frankness you have so explicitly demanded."

" Displeasure," returned he gravely, " I have no right to feel ; though I cannot say it will gratify me to find your sentiments and wishes different from my own ; but, before I enter any farther on the subject, I must first request you will candidly tell me your opinion of my friend Savage."

To reply to this question, though in some degree prepared for it by Charles's manner, Sidney did not find so easy ; but, on being im-

patiently reproached by him for promising sincerity she felt so little inclined to practise, she at length said, “I think Mr. Savage a very fine young man, and I believe him to be a very amiable one, and, as your friend, I have always felt a great prepossession in his favour; and that is all the opinion I have ever formed of him or can give you.”

“This is all I require,” replied Charles quickly; “nor need you have taken so long to deliberate on an answer you know must gratify me so highly; but you are like all other young ladies I ever knew, except one, mightily ashamed to declare your feelings on certain subjects, though such as only do honour to your taste and discernment: Savage is not only what you have declared you think him, but a young man of the very best sense and abilities, and of the nicest principles of honour and integrity.”

Sidney, dreading from these words that Charles had put a very false construction on the favourable opinion she had expressed of Mr. Savage, did not make any reply, and he eagerly continued, “Since I find your opinion

of my friend so exactly what I could desire, I will now mention a circumstance that took place a few nights ago, and which, while ignorant of your sentiments, I should not have chosen to repeat."

"Take care," cried Sidney, "you do not misinterpret what I have said; and be cautious lest, under the influence of such a deception, you mention any thing I ought not to hear."

"I must only take my chance for that," replied he, laughing; "I understand plain English, and if you have, as you said you would, stated your opinion candidly, I can run no chance of being deceived; at all events, I can do no harm by merely forestalling Savage a little, and, like a true friend, as I profess myself, endeavouring to smooth the difficulties of an undertaking, I have latterly begun to think was rather an Herculean labour; though the world, in general, taking the shadow for the substance, have not found their mistake till convinced by their sad experience that they have been duped like the thousands who have preceded them; and, instead of the gem they foolishly thought so easily attained, have discovered,

when too late, that they had merely an empty casket in their possession."

Sidney, who perceived in this metaphorical speech of Charles's a mere repetition of Mr. Savage's sentiments, concluded from his manner, and the whole tenour of his conversation, that he had been empowered by Savage to make her a tender of his hand, though surprised he should have intrusted such a commission to any human being : yet she was pleased that he had done so, as she felt the utmost dislike to any personal application from himself on such a subject, from an apprehension of being equally overpowered by his haughty pride and sarcastic reproaches on finding himself disappointed in having his addresses received in a manner he so little expected. She did not therefore give any interruption to Charles, who again resumed : " On the night I have mentioned, Savage and I supped together, and in the course of our conversation he spoke of you in such terms, that I told him, with a laugh, I believed you had made an impression on his heart ; on which he declared his affection, and asked me if I would use the influence he knew I had with

you to support his suit ; adding, that the moment he received any encouragement from you he would apply to my father. To this I replied, that nothing could give me greater pleasure than an union between a friend I so sincerely esteemed and a cousin whom I loved as a sister ; but, as Savage was a little off his guard, I refused at that time to enter any farther on the subject. The next morning he sent me an invitation to breakfast with him, and then perfectly remembering our conversation of the preceding night, he with equal energy, though not precisely in the same terms, repeated his declaration, saying, he only waited for a favourable opportunity to surrender himself and fortune to your absolute disposal ; at the same time hinting a wish of total silence till he had first obtained an avowal of your sentiments. As I knew he was anxious to avoid any sort of interference from my father till he had first obtained your permission to apply to him, I was so conscious of the just pride that prompted this request, and so well pleased at the delicacy with which he guarded against wounding my feelings, that I promised

the silence he required without seeming to know why it was asked, advising him to postpone any application to you till after Fanny's marriage and departure, as you could then better attend to your own feelings and affairs than with a mind occupied by the hateful scenes transacting in our family. I will now, my dear Sidney, conclude my tedious narrative by giving you advice which springs from the purest affection and regard for your future welfare, and that is, to deal as candidly with Savage as you have done with me, and you will ever hereafter command his most tender love and warmest admiration. His pride, I confess, is high ; perhaps you may have sometimes thought unreasonably so ; but it is generous, and springs from a noble disposition ; he could not bear to be either trifled with or deceived, and would, I am well convinced deeply resent being kept one moment in suspense : the woman who has a just sense of his merits, and frankly tells him so, may rest assured of ever meeting that tender attention and inviolable respect which Savage would consider so indisputably due to the wife of his heart and choice. Excuse me,

my dear Sidney, if I have spoken rather more plainly than I believe men in general are accustomed to speak to women on such subjects; but as a sister I consider you, and, as such, I speak without reserve, certain of meeting a similar return of confidence and advice from you on any subject on which I might require it: I will now conclude by declaring my delight at this prospect of a happy settlement to one I so sincerely love."

Sidney's distress and agitation at perceiving how deeply Charles was interested in promoting a connexion to which she felt the most invincible repugnance, and at being thus called on for ever to renounce all farther interest or affection for one whose image was only more deeply engraven on her heart by all the pains that had been taken to erase him from her remembrance, was so great, added to her fear of offending Charles, who had on every occasion proved himself so warm and so kind a friend, and whose conduct on this very occasion evinced the sincerest interest and anxiety for her happiness, that she knew not how to reply, or in what terms to reject a proposal she could not for a

moment think of accepting; and, instead of answering with the candour and firmness she had at first intended, she sat in painful and perturbed silence. Charles for some time regarded her with evident surprise, and then exclaimed, “What is the meaning of all this, Sidney? why do you not tell me your opinion of what I have just said? Treat me as you ever have done, and as I must say I deserve—like a friend. If you resent my freedom, candidly avow it; but do not shew so much agitation without even deigning to inform me for what reason it is felt.”

“Why do you so cruelly misinterpret my silence?” cried Sidney; “to your kindness, your affection, I neither can nor do feel insensible; and if I have hesitated to avow my sentiments, it has been simply from a fear of offending you by declaring them.”

“Offend me!” repeated he hastily; “why should a declaration of your sentiments offend me? If you dissent in opinion from me of what I have judged the best part to act respecting Savage, can you believe me so foolish or so pettish as to take unnecessary offence?”

" You mistake me totally," cried Sidney ; " I feel and acknowledge the justice of your advice, did I regard Mr. Savage with the sentiments which you seem to imagine ; but be not offended with me, my dear Charles, if I say I do not. I admire him, and candidly allow all his good qualities ; but to me, farther than gratitude for his good nature, and as your friend, he is an object of the most utter indifference : do, I entreat you, dissuade him from making proposals which I never can accept, and which will only subject him to the pain of disappointed pride ; and that, from every motive of regard for him and for you, I should be anxiously desirous to spare him."

" What is it you mean ?" cried Charles, astonished ; " can I have understood you rightly, that it is your intention to reject a man against whom you do not urge even the shadow of an objection, and whom you openly profess to admire and esteem ? Is this coquetry that I did not believe you capable of practising ? or is it only perverse rejection of my friendship and advice ?"

" It is neither indeed ; it is a simple declara-

tion of my own feelings. Why should I urge any objection to Mr. Savage, when I cannot point out a rational one? or why should you believe me capable of wilfully and ungratefully offending you? Yet to be guided by your advice I cannot; my whole heart refuses to feel for Mr. Savage those sentiments you seem to consider he deserves."

" Sidney," exclaimed Charles, violently offended, " this is mere trifling or evasion; no woman rejects a man against whom she declares she has no rational objection, and whom she avows she admires and esteems, without some very powerful motives to sway her conduct. Since you no longer consider me as worthy of your confidence, I am content to forego it, and shall not again trouble you with any advice or interference, which you now consider as superfluous. Henceforth act as you please, but never from this moment regard me as the friend I have, and with truth, professed myself. I never have nor ever will disguise my feelings, and never after this day can I view you with the same sentiments I have hitherto felt for you."

Overpowered by his reproaches, yet not daring to avow her attachment to Sedley, from a dread of rousing all the pride and violence of his disposition into flame, Sidney burst into tears, exclaiming, “ Why, Charles, do you make such cruel reproaches, which you surely do not —cannot think deserved ?”

“ If I did not,” replied he in a milder tone, “ I should not have made them ; convince me they are so by treating me with the same candour you have on other occasions practised, and I will instantly recant, and apologize for them.”

“ I cannot,” cried she, in a faltering voice ; “ and do not ask me.”

“ I will not,” replied he, after a moment’s silence, and with a voice and countenance that forcibly evinced how deeply he felt offended ; “ I have no desire to force your confidence, for that with which you have hitherto honoured me I now very evidently see the reason, and thank you accordingly. I shall not however longer harass you or myself on the subject ; you may therefore calm your agitation, and rest assured that disagreeable inquiries nor officious services you need ever again fear from me.”

Sidney, unable to reply for some time, wept in silence, when at length, in a low and mournful voice, she exclaimed, "Such reproaches, such severity, Charles, I did not expect from you, nor did I think you had so wholly forgotten the past, as to wound me by inquiries I equally dread and dislike to answer. Trusting to your former voluntary promise of forbearance, I will conquer my feelings rather than suffer you to remain in an error so wounding to them all ; but never, oh, never," added she, while a transient blush crimsoned her hitherto pale cheeks, " shall or can any other human being possess my affections, however readily I may feel and frankly acknowledge his merit."

"What is it I hear?" exclaimed Charles, losing his resentment in new and more powerful emotions ; "is it, can it be possible, that a weak and unavailing tenderness for Sedley has influenced your conduct, and can thus induce you to reject every other proposal, however honourable or advantageous ?"

Sidney made no reply ; she could not ; and, unable to endure Charles's piercing examination, whose eyes sparkled from emotions of

anger and surprise, she turned hastily away, and, drawing her veil close round her face, made many unavailing efforts to conquer her agitation, that she might endeavour to sooth his resentment at the declaration which he had so reluctantly compelled her to make.

The violence of her emotion at length subdued Charles's resentment, and, addressing her in a tone of the utmost kindness, he said, "However little I must own myself pleased at a discovery of the motive that has guided your conduct, you need not dread from me the slightest reproach; and I am sincerely sorry for that which passion betrayed me into making. But suffer me, without offending you, to give my opinion on this subject, and calmly to point out the ill consequences of indulging feelings so destructive of your happiness: I now understand the true source of your dejection, of your faded bloom and injured health, which I had hitherto attributed to anxiety respecting your law-suit."

Sidney, too much agitated to reply, bowed her assent, and Charles, without noticing her silence, continued: "The resentment that I do and must

feel for old Sedley's conduct cannot induce me to attach censure to Major Sedley, farther than the imprudence into which his extreme affection to you led him : as a man of honour, therefore, I ever have considered him, but could no longer do so if he again attempted to engage you in any clandestine correspondence ; after what has passed, it would deservedly subject him to the resentment I should then feel myself called on to shew. How then my dear Sidney, without a degree of impropriety I hope and believe neither would practise, are you and Major Sedley ever even to meet ? Are you alike to sacrifice pride and prudence to the remote and romantic prospect of waiting till his father's death shall set him at liberty to act for himself, without calculating on the thousand chances that may in the interval occur to separate you finally. Even if no such circumstances should arise, never could I, never could my father, accept for a relative the son of a man, who offered you and your family, such gross and unpardonable insults ; and you surely would not, like Fanny, wish to marry in direct opposition to the approbation

of every one who loves you, or feels interested in your welfare."

"No, no," cried Sidney, shocked by the whole of this speech; "I have no such wish, no such intention; nor have I formed any plan so truly hateful as to rest its chance of success on the death of a fellow-creature, when long might I be consigned to the grave before the event on which you so falsely believe I ground my hopes might occur to ensure their accomplishment, even if I were either so weak or so wicked as to rest any on such a foundation."

"What then are your plans? what can be your hopes?" demanded Charles, eagerly: "surely you cannot intend to live single merely because you have been disappointed in the first person who has, and I will even say deservedly, won your affections."

"It certainly would be my own wish," replied she, calmly; "and I hope you would not consider it an improper one."

"No, not improper," cried he gravely; "but most assuredly very imprudent, and very romantic, and one that you might hereafter very bitterly regret. You may perhaps smile to hear

me speak so seriously, but life, my dear Sidney, is not all comprised in the mere season of youth; and, if we wilfully destroy every chance of comfort and happiness for the middle and more advanced period, we generally, I believe, learn to lament our error when it is too late to retrieve it."

" And would you," said Sidney, " think me right in consenting to marry Mr. Savage, when you know that my affections are so much engaged, I will even confess imprudently, that I do not, and cannot, feel the slightest love for him? Would you esteem such conduct either prudent or honourable?"

" No," cried he vehemently; " I should think it the very reverse of both, and am the last person in existence who would either approve or advise it."

" What is it you would advise then," cried Sidney with great emotion; " and if I can, I will act as you desire? But oh, Charles, I cannot, nor will you ask me to outrage all my feelings, merely to obtain wealth which I could neither value nor enjoy."

" How much I regret," cried he with great

softness, “the harshness and reproaches into which I have been betrayed! How happy would it have been for Lady Beauchamp if she had possessed even a very small portion of your gentleness! She is not, however, longer worth regarding; but, since you, dear Sidney, are disposed to consult my wishes, I will candidly tell you what I think, without fearing that you will put any false construction on advice which is the pure result of the warm affection I ever have felt and ever must feel for you.”

As Sidney observed Charles's cheeks were tinged with scarlet as he pronounced those words, from a recollection of what his anxiety might by an ill-natured person be attributed to, she with equal truth and energy declared her perfect conviction of the purity of his motives and the strength of his regard; and he then resumed, “There is not in the world a man I would so much wish to see you married to as Savage. His family, character, and situation, are every thing I could approve or desire, and his admiration of you and his sentiments just such as I think you deserve. What I would then strenuously recommend is, a vigorous

exertion on your own part to banish Sedley entirely from your heart and thoughts; look upon him as he now is, and ever must be, a stranger, with whom you never can have any future connexion, and endeavour to supply his place in your affections with one, who, had he been so fortunate as to have known you first, would then have acquired, as he now deserves, the first place in your regard and esteem. Do this, my dear Sidney, and you will do all I wish—all I can either hope or desire will result from your prudence and Savage's merit, which can only be obscured by being invidiously contrasted with one, whom, because first, you think best."

Against following this advice Sidney's heart involuntarily decided, nor could she forbear feeling a slight degree of resentment at what she considered an undeserved preference of Savage ; but, sensible of Charles's kindness, and truly grateful for his tender and unabating attention to her happiness, she replied, that though she could not promise to be guided by his advice, she would endeavour to conform to it, as far as was consistent with honour,

and with the candour to which she must consider Mr. Savage as entitled ; but that to any proposals he made, for the present, she must give a decided rejection.

To express his opinion of this resolution Charles had not time, as just then Mr. Savage rode up to the curriole, and, after speaking to Charles, went round to the side on which Sidney was sitting, and with tenderness and anxiety addressed her, seeming to consider any farther reserve unnecessary before him, after the explicit avowal he had already made of his sentiments and intentions.

The perturbation of Sidney's mind, from the conversation in which she had just been engaged, and the sort of involuntary disgust she felt to Savage, from having heard Charles so openly declare his preference in his favour, agitated her so much, that scarcely could she command herself so far as to reply with civility to his inquiries. Mr. Savage, surprised and evidently disturbed by the painful embarrassment she evinced, soon relieved her from so disagreeable a feeling of restraint, by directing his conversation entirely to Charles,

who, however, little internally pleased at observing her emotion, without seeming to notice it, rallied his spirits, to converse as usual with his friend.

Before their return to Merrion-square they were joined by some other young men of Charles's acquaintance, one of whom pressing Montague and Mr. Savage to accompany him, to see and give their judgment of a pair of horses he wished to purchase, they consented ; and Mr. Savage, after handing Sidney out of the curricle at Mr. Montague's door, said, in a low voice, he would hope for the honour of a few moments' private conversation with her at any hour she would have the goodness to appoint on the ensuing day.

Perfectly aware of the subject on which he wished to speak, Sidney, with a degree of agitation Savage but too evidently construed in his own favour, replied she should be at home the whole morning, and, without waiting to hear his thanks, drew her hand from his, and hurried up stairs, leaving Mr. Savage at once pained and pleased by emotion he considered so indisputable a proof of the power he had

acquired over her heart, and of her present domestic uneasiness. Earnestly anxious to withdraw her from a situation he was convinced she found most irksome and painful, and with all the exultation of a proud, though generous mind, he enjoyed the conviction of having secured the affections and gratitude of the only woman he had ever loved ; and, with even more than his wonted pride and vanity, he rejoiced in the idea of his power to place that woman in a situation which she was so well qualified to fill, and in his being enabled to command all that could at once gratify her taste and promote her happiness.

With far different emotions did Sidney reflect on the present aspect of her affairs, when the solitude of her apartment enabled her to take a full review of her situation, and calmly to reflect on the advice which Charles had given her, from motives, she was well convinced, of the purest friendship. Was she, in defiance of prudence and probability, to cherish her affection for a man, of whom she had been, both by her own friends and his, so positively forbidden to think ? Was she to remain an eternal

burden on her uncle's family, when the honourable means of securing to herself not only independence, but splendour, were with generous enthusiasm pressed on her acceptance by a man, to whom the most fastidious could make no objection, to whom her situation was perfectly known, and who had acted with a degree of caution and reserve which led her naturally to conclude that a resolution so well weighed would not hastily be repented ? Her pride revolted at the idea of becoming the portionless wife of any man, but, situated as she was, it would not be less wounding, less degrading, to share the wealth so generously offered to her acceptance, than to remain, though not an unwelcome, at least a certain burden on friends whose kindness she must long tax, in order to give her the slightest chance of recovering her fortune ?

All these prudent considerations, which the advice and arguments of Charles had suggested, rose in rapid succession to Sidney's mind, and almost determined her to make the struggle, however hard, and to be guided entirely by his advice. But, this transient resolution, soon yielded to reflections of an opposite nature.

Could she make so base a return to all Mr. Savage's generosity and tenderness, as to accept the hand he offered, without even having it in her power to make the return that could alone have induced the proposal? Could she, after all that Sedley had suffered, and still continued to endure, and while so warmly sympathizing in his feelings, plunge the dagger still deeper in his heart, by convincing him that a short six months had blotted him wholly from her recollection? And could she, with affections so fondly, so firmly his, consent to become the wife of another?

“ No,” cried she, in an agony of distress, “ never will I act such a part; never shall any difficulty, any false pride, induce me to become the perjured wife of any man; never will I deliberately outrage my feelings, and the duty I alike owe to Heaven and to myself, by venturing with my lips to pronounce a vow my whole heart refuses to ratify. The least return I could make to Mr. Savage for his generosity and tenderness would be the full possession of a heart he has valued at so high a price; and, since that is no longer in my power, since I

cannot even resolve to make the exertions required of me, I will frankly tell him so. Whatever disappointment or anger he may for the moment feel, he will have no right to complain ; and, let my situation be what it may, I shall, at least, have the melancholy satisfaction of reflecting I have never wantonly injured or deceived any human being."

In some degree tranquillized by having at length decided on the part she ought to act, and trusting to Mr. Savage's pride and delicacy, and to Charles's honour and kindness, for saving her from any contentions with her uncle on the subject, she summoned sufficient resolution to join the family in the drawing-room.

As Charles did not return to dinner, and Mrs. Montague's spirits were too much depressed either to go abroad or to have company at home, the evening passed in a kind of melancholy stillness that Sidney found extremely grateful to her feelings, though she was grieved to observe how severely Mr. and Mrs. Montague suffered from the conduct of - a daughter from whom they had deserved so

different a return, for the kindness and tenderness they had so lavishly bestowed on her : and though more of anger than sorrow appeared to mingle in Mr. Montague's feelings, he was yet greatly shocked at the fate of a child, whom, if not his favourite one, he had ever loved with strong parental affection.

CHAP. IV.

AT the usual hour next day, Mrs. Montague ordered her carriage; and Sidney declining to accompany her, she set out, attended by Miss Watkins, and by Anna, who was not a little curious to be informed of Sidney's reason for staying at home; but, not wishing to hear from her a mere repetition of the advice that she had already received from Charles, Sidney evaded her inquiries.

They had not been long gone when a servant announced Mr. Savage, whom Sidney rose to meet, with sensations of confusion and agitation, on perceiving, by his air and manner, how little he came prepared for the reply that his proposals were to receive.

For some time after his entrance, Mr. Savage conversed on indifferent subjects, anxious to allow Sidney and himself to recover from their mutual embarrassment; when, with equal

fervour and delicacy, he made her an offer of his hand and heart, and requested her permission to speak to Mr. Montague, in order to settle with him the necessary preliminaries to their immediate marriage.

The extreme uneasiness that Sidney felt at the prospect of Charles's displeasure, and her unwillingness to avow her own sentiments, prevented her from making any effort to interrupt Mr. Savage; but, compelled to reply to his pressing entreaties to be relieved from suspense, in a low and agitated manner she thanked him for the honour his generous proposals had conferred on her, but declared her inability to accept them.

The surprise that Mr. Savage felt at hearing an answer he had so little expected for some moments deprived him of utterance, but at length, recovering more presence of mind, with mingled haughtiness and agitation he requested she would inform him how he had so forfeited her good opinion, that she totally declined giving the slightest encouragement to the hopes which he had been induced, he now found so erroneously, to form.

" I am extremely sorry, Sir," said Sidney, with great mildness, " that any circumstance has occurred to lead you into an error, that, with the strictest truth, I assure you, gives me very sincere pain; but I have never intentionally deceived you;—long before I had the pleasure of knowing you," continued she, colouring very high, " I had lost all power of choice, though compelled, by my situation, to silence. I have now, Sir, dealt candidly with you, and will trust to your own generosity for not exposing me to the displeasure of my friends, by betraying my confidence, or uttering reproaches which you cannot, I hope, think I deserve."

" To you," cried he, in breathless agitation, " I have no right to utter reproaches, and never shall you hear one from me; my folly alone has led me into error; but never can I forgive Montague's baseness and treachery: he might have found some other man, beside the one who had so long considered him as a friend, to make the dupe of his hypocrisy."

" What is it you mean?" exclaimed Sidney, losing every other sensation in that of astonishment: " how has Charles deceived you? He

was entirely ignorant of my feelings till yesterday ; and surely, since that period, he has not, he could not, after my express declaration, have made the slightest effort to lead you into error."

" If he was ignorant of your sentiments," cried he vehemently, " he could not possibly have been ignorant of his own ; to him I frankly avowed my feelings and my wishes, yet he gave me no hint of his ; he taught me to expect his warmest support, at the very moment he was endeavouring to undermine me : but it is no matter," continued he, suddenly checking himself, and rising from his seat, while the deepest crimson flushed his cheeks : " I beg your pardon if I have unguardedly given you offence that I did not intend—to you I owe nothing but thanks and gratitude, for the honour and candour with which you have treated me."

He was then leaving the room, when Sidney, gathering from his reiterated accusation of Charles that he suspected he was the person who had usurped that place in her affections which he had vainly sought to obtain,

and terrified at the apprehension of what might ensue from suffering him to remain in such an error, entreated him to return in a tone of supplicating earnestness, to which not even his anger and agitation could render him insensible: approaching her, he begged she would honour him with her commands, but with a hurry and wildness of manner that shewed the tumult and disorder of his mind.

“ I have requested you to return,” said Sidney, “ from an apprehension that you labour under a mistake extremely injurious to Charles’s honour, and which, from justice to him, to you, to myself, I feel called on to remove. From what you have said, I am induced to think you believe him the person”—she hesitated, stopped, and, colouring violently, was unable to proceed.

“ And is he not the person who has engaged your affections?” cried he, vehemently : “ Has he not deceived me even at the moment I most implicitly trusted to his honour and his friendship?”

“ No, upon my honour, he has not,” exclaimed she, with great emotion : “ had I fol-

lowed his advice, his wishes”—she again stopped, but, after a moment's silence, added, “I will candidly tell you all, and I need scarcely say that I expect you will hold my confidence sacred—but after what I have already said, you can no longer suspect Charles of a breach of honour that he could not practise towards any human being, especially towards the man whom, of all his friends, he seems most to value and esteem.”

Savage made no reply, and for some time walked through the room, too much perturbed to speak, yet evidently ashamed of his emotion, and making the most vigorous exertions to control his feelings : having partly succeeded, he returned, and, taking a seat beside Sidney, said, with a voice and countenance of forced serenity, “Pardon me for the uneasiness I have made you feel, and for the suspicions I have entertained of a friend I should have better known. For the confidence you have reposed in me I feel most truly grateful, and rest assured at no future period shall you have reason to regret having so implicitly trusted to my honour. One question, and one alone, do

I wish to ask ; and, that is, whether Montague knows of your engagement."

"I am under no engagement," said Sidney, blushing : "if I had, I should at once have proclaimed it."

"Under no engagement!" cried he, starting and colouring : "did you not tell me, at least did you not give me to understand, that you were?"

"I have promised to be candid," said she, "and, with whatever pain to my feelings, I will fulfil my promise : names, however, I cannot mention, that delicacy and propriety must forbid."

Then, making a violent effort to control her feelings, she related, concisely, all that had passed between her and Major Sedley, and even mentioned the circumstance that had entirely broken off their union.

Mr. Savage listened to her narrative with feelings of agitation he vainly endeavoured to repress ; and, the moment she ceased speaking, exclaimed with energy, "And can you indeed resolve to sacrifice your youth, your beauty, and your happiness, to preserve an ideal constancy

to a man who could so tamely resign you!— Oh! were I so fortunate as to have secured such a place as he holds in your affections, no father, no friends, not the united world, should withhold me from publicly and decidedly enforcing my claims: the man who could one moment hesitate is unworthy, totally unworthy of you."

"To enter into any defence of conduct I must approve," said Sidney, somewhat offended by his vehemence, "I feel at once degrading and unpleasant: you will now therefore suffer me to wave the subject."

"I meant no offence," exclaimed Savage passionately; "I merely uttered my feelings; but, since you candidly avow that you entertain no prospect of again meeting, will you suffer me to indulge a hope, that, at some future period, you may feel more inclined to favour my present suit? I do not ask, I do not wish," continued he, observing her change colour, "to limit you to any time; to be the slightest restraint on your inclinations; but, to know you free, yet give up all hope, all expectation for myself, is more than I can resolve."

" This from you, Mr. Savage !" said Sidney, faintly smiling : " After all I have just said, you are the last man, from whom I should have expected such a declaration."

" Perhaps," cried he, reddening, " you thought me too proud : but indeed you are mistaken : to secure even the second place in such a heart as yours would give me more real happiness than to secure the first in that of any other woman I have ever known."

" I cannot," cried she, excessively embarrassed, " feel myself justified in giving hopes which I might not be inclined faithfully to fulfil ; I can not even wish to change my present sentiments : why then should I lead you to expect what I do not," added she, in extreme confusion, " either believe, or ' wish possible ? ' "

The darkest shade of jealousy stole over Mr. Savage's countenance, and for some moments he remained silent. But his vanity, was subdued by the conviction, that, so far from seeking to attract his attention, Sidney had never even wished for his admiration ; and that selfish or narrow views were as remote from her imagination as he had ever fondly believed.

them. His pride was also blunted by the certainty that the object preferred had preceded, and not supplanted him; and all his passions were more powerfully awakened by meeting an obstacle he had never foreseen. Secretly flattering himself with the hope of supplanting a man he need now so little dread, and not only rivalling but surpassing him in her affections and esteem, with an ardour that Sidney had not believed him capable of feeling he urged her to permit him to indulge the hope of at length conquering her present reluctance by his unabating attention and assiduity; declaring that, should his rival be hereafter enabled to renew his suit, and that she felt disposed to yield to his prior claims, he would resign her without farther struggle.

The fallacy of promises made in a moment of passion, the impossibility of entering into such an arrangement without engaging herself in a manner she could neither in honour nor propriety recall, and the folly of expecting that a man who could not without evident anger and impatience, hear the name of his rival even alluded to, would at a future period

resign his own pretensions in favour of that rival, without evincing either disapprobation or discontent, forcibly struck Sidney, and forbade her for a moment listening to a request which her desire to oblige Charles, by shewing a wish, at least, to be guided by his advice, had involuntarily inclined her to favour. Added to these considerations, the dread she felt of giving pain to Sedley, the conviction that he would hear of such an arrangement, and that, too, with all the exaggeration of rumour, joined to the cruelty and injustice there would be in thus wantonly trifling with any man's feelings shewed her the absolute necessity of firmness, and determined her rather to give present pain than future disappointment, and thereby lay herself open to deserved reproach: she therefore mildly, though steadily declared that such conduct would be dishonourable trifling, equally unworthy of him and herself.

A confidence that spoke such high trust in his honour and delicacy, and such an earnest desire to spare his pride from the slightest wound, gratified Mr. Savage more sensibly

than any other concession could have effected, except that of her willing heart and hand. All his passions up in arms, feeling them even more powerfully inflamed by opposition ; not inclined to feel much diffidence in his own powers of attraction ; and internally despising a rival who had so tamely resigned one he thought that he would encounter any difficulty to obtain, he now resolved to try a last expedient, on finding it impossible to induce Sidney to consent to any proposal which she deemed in the slightest degree incompatible with honour or delicacy. He said he would, however reluctantly, acquiesce in her determination, convinced that it was founded on principles as pure as they were disinterested ; but, though she denied him any hope of hereafter aspiring to her love, she would not, he trusted, debar him from the enjoyment of her society, and from holding a place in her friendship which he would endeavour to deserve by acting in every instance, according to her wishes.

The sophistry of this reasoning Sidney clearly discovered ; but, not considering herself

authorized to dismiss any man from her uncle's house without his permission, and unable, without betraying a degree of vanity repugnant to her feelings, to warn Mr. Savage of his imprudence, she replied, that the friendship he had so well deserved, she should ever entertain for him ; more was not in her power to bestow, and more she trusted to his own honour to exonerate her in future, from ever having given him any reason to expect.

A glow of pride and pleasure alike tinged Mr. Savage's cheeks as he listened to a declaration which at once wounded his pride and encouraged his hopes by the concession. He rested on it as the basis that would infallibly secure the accomplishment of all his brightest hopes, for he could not for a moment indulge the fear that a distant, silent, and, as he supposed, despicably tame rival, would have the least chance of long withstanding his advantages of constant intercourse and assiduous attention. After expressing his thanks with a degree of fervour, that almost tempted Sidney to warn him of the delusion he indulged, he took his leave, eager to mention to Charles

all that had passed, except his doubts with respect to his honour, and to request his continued support of his pretensions, confiding in his friendship to take the hint he intended to give of a wish to spend some part of the summer at Belle Vuc ; for he trusted that, long before the expiration of his visit, he should gain such an ascendancy in Sidney's heart, as not only entirely to obliterate his rival from her remembrance, but even to make her rejoice at those obstacles to their union which she now so bitterly deplored. In short all anger and disappointment at his present failure sunk in the pleasure those hopes and views inspired.

When he was gone, Sidney reflected with renewed anxiety on her situation, and determined to use redoubled caution on her part, to supply the want of prudence Mr. Savage evinced on his; as she could not for a moment doubt the views and hopes that induced, so haughty a man, to solicit the continuance of her acquaintance ; and unable to convince him of the weakness of his conduct, and the fallacy of his expectations, she could only resolve to guard her own honour from impeachment by de-

cidedly breaking with him the moment he exceeded those bounds of friendly regard he had declared should limit his hopes and wishes for the future,—convinced from the state of her own feelings, and the unconquerable anxiety she felt to hear some intelligence of Sedley, that there was no great chance of his obtaining that place in her affections to which he in reality aspired ; however willing to disguise his views from her, merely to render their success more certain.

The intelligence she so ardently desired to hear respecting Major Sedley was nearer than at the moment she expected, as on Anna's return she again renewed her inquiries of what had prevented Sidney from accompanying them on their drive ; and, after listening with astonishment to a short recital of the scene that had taken place between her and Mr. Savage, and severely blaming her for rejecting his proposals, concluded by saying, “ I will now, Sidney, inform you of a circumstance which I would yesterday have mentioned, had not Charles positively prohibited me from ever speaking of Sedley to you in future, as I

could not, on his asking me, deny that we sometimes talked of him ; but, as such caution can now be no longer necessary, I will convince you of your folly in rejecting so highly advantageous a settlement for the sake of a man who will never, perhaps, think of you more."

" Perhaps he may not," said Sidney, turning pale ; " but on what circumstance do you ground such an opinion ? "

" I will tell you all I have heard, and then draw your own inferences. I had a letter yesterday from Sophy Radcliffe, and she mentioned that Major Sedley had determined to quit his regiment, and go into one under orders for Spain ; that Captain Elinore had also resolved to accompany him abroad ; and that Mr. French had told her, a few days ago, they had left C——, for that purpose, and were, he believed, on their passage. She also added that Major Sedley had been visibly changed, for some time previous to his leaving C——, having entirely recovered from his melancholy, but grown so extremely violent in his temper, that few people wished to ask him to

their parties ; Mr. French declaring he was so disagreeable, and Captain Elmore so pettish and intemperate on every occasion where his friend was concerned, that he was excessively rejoiced at their departure. I now ask you, Sidney, whether all this looks like the constancy you had promised yourself ; and whether leaving the kingdom, instead of making any effort to bring his father over to his wishes, or giving you the slightest hint of his intentions, is very consonant to the opinion you have formed of him ?”

Overpowered by intelligence she had so little expected to hear, Sidney was unable to make any reply ; and Anna, startled at the effects of her information, on perceiving the death-like paleness of her countenance, endeavoured to atone for her indiscretion by using all the common-place arguments of consolation, but finding all alike listened to in silence, half angry, and half frightened at her inattention ; she at length left her, to dress for dinner.

Dress or dinner never occurred to Sidney : this last blow, which she considered as the final termination of all her hopes with regard to

Sedley, wholly overpowered her and, she could only preserve sufficient recollection to throw herself on the bed, and plead to the maid, who came to inform her dinner was on the table, that she had so violent a head-ache she could not go down stairs.

When dinner was over Mrs. Montague came up to her room, bringing with her some cake and wine, which she earnestly pressed Sidney to take, expressing the utmost concern at her indisposition. She thanked her in a low voice for her kindness, and endeavoured, at her request, to swallow some of the wine ; but, scarcely had she tasted it, when she returned it to Mrs. Montague, declaring her inability to take any more, and begging to be left alone and quiet for some hours, saying she should then be perfectly well.

Mrs. Montague, alarmed at her paleness, and the trepidation of her voice and manner, called to a maid-servant ; and, desiring her to remain in the room till her return, hurried down to apprise Mr. Montague of her illness, saying she had found her much more seriously indisposed than she had apprehended.

Mr. Montague, alarmed at this account, accompanied her to Sidney's apartment. Recalled to herself by her intuitive dread of her uncle's discovering her feelings with regard to Sedley, she endeavoured to reply to his questions, declaring she felt herself so oppressed by a head-ache, that she had scarcely power to speak.

Mr. Montague, apprehensive of a fever, expressed his resolution of calling in a physician, which Sidney vainly endeavoured to prevent. Unable to argue with, or oppose him, she at length concealed her face in the bed-clothes, and gave way to her overwrought feelings in tears, that, by degrees, restored her to recollection.

Mrs. Montague remaining in the room to assist the maid to put her to bed, on perceiving her emotion, and her violent efforts to disguise it, insisted on her drinking some water, but made no sort of comment on, or inquiry into, her feelings.

In a short time the physician Mr. Montague had sent for arrived; he declared the attack entirely nervous, and after ordering

some composing medicines, he desired that her mind should be kept free from agitation, and took his leave.

Mrs. Montague sat with her some time after his departure, and, after seeing that she had taken the medicines, left her, at her own desire, to Mrs. Rice's care, who, on hearing of her illness, came to offer her services; and Sidney, recollecting all her former kindness and attention to Sedley, felt a sort of involuntary pleasure in her attendance.

Very late in the evening, Anna came up to see her; and Sidney, surprised at observing her eyes were red with weeping, and affected at believing she was thus distressed at the effects of her own unguarded information, held out her hand, declaring she felt herself better.

Anna took her hand, and, in a voice struggling between anger and emotion, expressed her pleasure at hearing her say so, and, taking a seat beside the bed, maintained a profound silence, unusual to her in any circumstances.

Too much oppressed to think on the subject, Sidney heeded not her inattention, and lay perfectly quiet till Mrs. Rice left the room,

when she was roused from her stupor by hearing Anna express her sorrow for having mentioned Sedley's name to her, declaring that it was the last time it should ever pass her lips.

"I should rather have heard the intelligence from you than from any other person," said Sidney, sighing deeply, "and why should you regret it?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Anna, with great warmth, "I never saw Charles so angry; he has scolded me more within the last two hours than he ever did in the course of his life; for, on hearing mamma mention your being so much affected, and express her surprise at your being so suddenly attacked with such violent nervous symptoms, he instantly suspected you had heard of Sedley's going abroad, and calling me into another room, he questioned me so strictly whether I had heard it, or mentioned it to you, that I could not evade his inquiries. He then grew perfectly outrageous, and swore he never would forgive me for disobeying his injunctions; nothing I could say could appease him, though I am sure I did not intend

to do any harm by merely relating what every person could have told you, for it is quite publicly known, as Charles said it was from this town that he and Elmore sailed."

A deep and convulsive sigh from Sidney checked Anna, and alarmed her for the consequences that might again ensue from renewing the subject ; and, hastily pouring out some of the medicine, she forced the scarcely-conscious Sidney to drink such a quantity, that, as it contained a large portion of opium, soon threw her into a heavy sleep, which relieved Anna from the terror of again incurring her brother's severe displeasure for her folly and rashness.

CHAP. V.

FROM the deep sleep into which Anna's injudicious use of the medicine had thrown her Sidney did not awake till late the next day, and then found herself so languid, and her intellects so confused, from the effects of the opium, that scarcely could she form a distinct thought, or answer any question rationally. Though the attending physician dissipated Mr. Montague's fears of a fever, he did not give any great hope of a speedy termination to an illness so violent and overpowering in its first attack, but enforced the necessity of carefully guarding against all that could harass or agitate her, and repeating that her disorder was entirely on the nerves.

This information at first surprised Mr. Montague, till recollecting his having mentioned the desperate state of her affairs, at the time of Mr. Ingram's proposal, and remembering

that since that period she had never recovered her spirits, he concluded the apprehended loss of her fortune had preyed incessantly on her mind, and had at length produced this serious illness. He now bitterly lamented his unkindness on that occasion, and sincerely regreted that he had, from any motive, been induced to give her information, which had in any degree tended to produce such afflicting consequences.

Charles, though perfectly convinced that his father was, in part at least, deceived in the cause to which he attributed Sidney's illness, suffered him to remain in error, certain that to reveal the truth would merely exasperate his father, and perhaps subject Sidney to the effects of his displeasure, from which, however angry with her for persisting in feelings so galling to his pride, he generously determined to save her.

In this state of mental stupor Sidney continued for several hours, very imperfectly remembering the intelligence that had so wholly overpowered her; at length with her recollection returned all the keenness of her feel-

ings ; and, though perfectly calm and passive during the day, her pillow was at night bathed in tears for the fate of one she now almost numbered with the dead. Far from looking on his going abroad as a proof of his indifference, she regarded it as the most convincing proof she had yet received of the ardour of an attachment, that had so entirely vanquished his fortitude and self-command, as to induce him again to rush unto the fatigues and dangers of foreign service, in the midst of the sanguinary scene that the implacably contended fields of Spain exhibited ; he seemed to consider life no longer worth preserving, since he had lost the hope of spending it in her society. She could not indeed approve of what appeared to her like desperation, yet she could not, in the agony and bitterness of her own anguish, severely condemn him for feeling anxious to quit a scene where his friends concurred with her's to rob life of every hope and every charm that rendered existence desirable ; they had even denied him the melancholy satisfaction of knowing how sincerely she had participated in his feelings.

"Yet oh, Sedley," thought she, "could you have known the anguish your rashness has given me, you would not, for my sake, have acted such a part; you would not, in the mere madness of despair, have voluntarily risked a life I prize so infinitely beyond my own; you would not have deprived me of the last, the only, consolation permitted me, in knowing that you were safe!"

The fever that had for some days internally preyed on Sidney's constitution, was thus augmented by these reflections, and her spirits, so often rallied, refused any longer to bear up against the weight of sorrow and apprehension that oppressed her, for she could scarcely have more certainly numbered Sedley with the dead, had she heard he was no more, than on learning that he had gone to Spain. That he had not by some means apprized her of his intentions, nor consulted her wishes before he decided on a resolution of such momentous consequence to her peace, equally surprised and afflicted her; nor could she account for it in any other manner than by supposing resentment for her letter had alone influenced his conduct. And Captain Elmore's equally abstaining from

giving her the information confirmed her in the sad certainty, that, amidst all the anguish which had so cruelly oppressed Sedley's mind, he had not the alleviation of believing her still faithful to the affection she had professed for him. This cruel uncertainty with regard to her feelings had, she feared, driven him to act with a precipitation so little consonant to the general tenour of his character; and most poignantly did she now bewail her uncle's harshness in not permitting her to soften the stern rejection he had compelled her to give him; and almost regretted that she had not, through Captain Elmore, apprized him of her real sentiments. Yet this was but the regret of a moment; she could not have foreseen the consequences that had resulted from the step she had been forced to take, nor could now lament that she had acted with steady and uniform propriety. Oppressed, however by the melancholy effects that had ensued, though preserving the enthusiasm of generous and fervent attachment, she almost regretted the strength of those feelings that had so cruelly destroyed the happiness of his life, and rendered that life of so little importance in

his own estimation as to be no longer worthy of his care.

The anguish that thus weighed so heavily on Sidney's mind baffled alike care and medicine, and she was for many days confined entirely to her bed in a state of languor and dejection that precluded either the wish or power to derive relief and consolation from the society of her friends.

Mrs. Montague, finding that, unless Sidney herself made some effort to struggle against the indisposition that oppressed her, all that her friends could do for her would be in vain, agreed, at the entreaty of her son and husband to speak to her on the subject.

This commission she executed with equal delicacy and kindness, gently pointing out the impropriety of giving way to such immoderate, though silent sorrow, for an event that might not take place, and against which her uncle would take the utmost care to guard ; warmly, representing the unhappiness she gave to her uncle, to Charles, to herself, and to all who felt interested in her welfare, by thus seeming to doubt their kindness and sympathy, and

brooding in silence over a misfortune, that even, if it did occur, would only remotely affect her, and instancing her own sister as one, who had, through the misconduct of her eldest brother, and her weak reliance on his honour, lost almost all her fortune. Yet she had, in Mr. Montague's house, found a home, as happy and as pleasant as the unfortunate asperity of her temper would permit; she warned her by this example to guard against giving way to feelings that could only injure her own happiness and the happiness of her friends, without, in any degree, lessening the evil she deplored; and concluded by saying, that from the uniform gentleness of her disposition, and the strong sense of religion she had on every occasion evinced, she had not thought it possible she would have so weakly yielded to unavailing regret, or so rashly murmured against the wisdom and justice of the dispensations of Heaven.

To the commencement of Mrs. Montague's conversation Sidney listened in an agony of terror, dreading that Anna had betrayed the source of her sorrow, which would, she knew, subject her to her uncle's severe displeasure;

but soothed on finding that Anna, either for her sake or her own, had been silent, and that to anxiety respecting her law-suit were all her feelings attributed, she listened with attention and gratitude to advice, that, however it failed to console, at least convinced her of the necessity of endeavouring to attain resignation to the will of Heaven. She recollects that every misfortune she had through life deplored had been succeeded by a still severer calamity; and her mind, weakened by illness and sorrow, became possessed with the superstitious dread that her very grief might accelerate the punishment that she deprecated ; and she now felt terrified at a collection of the immoderate sorrow to which she had yielded herself a prey. With fervent and sincere devotion supplicating resignation to the inevitable evils that awaited her, instead of weakly yielding to the wish she had indulged of soon terminating her life and sorrows, she endeavoured to arm her mind with fortitude to endure, the inscrutable dispensations of Providence; and a remembrance of the misery Sedley had given her, by so rashly yielding to despair, served as an additional

motive to inspire her with courage to guard him from similar wretchedness, should he be spared to return ; and to save him from the anguish he would then endure if conscious his own precipitance had hurried to the grave one he had so fondly, though so unfortunately for both, loved. Nor were her feelings and wishes confined entirely to self, and selfish considerations ; she could not, on a review of her conduct and situation, acquit herself of ingratitude to friends who had so kindly protected her from every evil they had the means of guarding her against ; and, dismissing from her mind all feelings of resentment to her uncle for the harshness into which a sense of propriety, as well as pride, urged him, felt anxiously desirous to repay his tenderness and attention by an assiduous endeavour to supply the place of the daughter who had so wantonly wounded his peace, and lost her place in his heart ; and felt how truly she ought to appreciate his and her aunt's kindness, at a period when their minds were so occupied with their own peculiar feelings. These reflections, and the exertions to which they gave rise, very soon enabled her to quit her bed.

During the whole of this period Mr. Savage had been a daily visitor at Merrion-square ; and though with Charles he attempted no disguise, but had frankly related all that had passed between him and Sidney, and his determination never, unless from absolute necessity, to yield his pretensions to her favour, scarcely could he, even with his assistance, disguise from Mr. and Mrs. Montague the anxiety he suffered. With all his tenderness to Sidney, to have any person but Charles suspect he would have sacrificed so much to obtain her, would have given a wound to his haughty spirit more acute than even the disappointment of his affections, the fear of which had led him to encounter the too-probable risk of meeting it.

As the physicians strenuously advised amusement and change of scene, however repugnant Sidney felt, in the present weak state of her spirits, to join the family, particularly from a dread of encountering Charles's observations, and perhaps reproaches, for feelings so averse to those he was desirous she should encourage, she made not the slightest opposition to Mrs.

Montague's wishes, but consented to go down stairs as soon as she was able to leave her apartment

On hearing she was in the drawing-room, Mrs. Montague left the dinner-table much earlier than usual, accompanied by Miss Watkins and Anna, who all with great kindness, though Miss Watkins with great formality, expressed their pleasure at seeing her once more enabled to appear among them.

Mrs. Montague, feeling an increasing regard for Sidney since the period she became convinced of the injury Lady Beauchamp had meditated against her, and anxious to sooth and entertain her, took a seat beside her on the sopha, and, after talking to her for some time on indifferent subjects, took out a letter which she had that morning received from her daughter, and read various passages from it, containing a minute description of the splendid party that now filled Lord Mount Eagle's house, and all the various pleasures that had been provided for her amusement, declaring she felt herself supremely happy, and concluding with a request that Mrs. Montague would in-

spect and give her opinion of a ready-furnished house Sir Townly had commissioned Mrs. Talbot to procure for him in Merrio~~square~~, as she purposed to be in town in the course of the ensuing fortnight.

Mrs. Montague, extremely pleased by the contents of this letter, and much gratified at the prospect of soon seeing her daughter, was in better spirits than she had been since the commencement of the disputes respecting her marriage, and equally gentle when either grieved or happy. Sidney experienced involuntary relief and pleasure in the kindness and animation of her conversation, and in seeing her restored to her former peace and happiness.

Early in the evening Mr. Montague and Charles came into the drawing-room, and, though both were evidently affected at observing Sidney's pale and wan countenance, neither expressed their feelings, but with tender and affectionate cordiality declared their pleasure at seeing her; and as Mr. and Mrs. Montague had alike banished from their mind every apprehension of his entertaining any attachment

to her inimical to their views and wishes, Charles quickly relieved all her fears of his displeasure by throwing himself on the sofa beside her, and in a strain of gaiety, peculiar to himself, endeavoured to enliven her spirits. Though no effort could enable her wholly to throw off the heavy dejection that oppressed her, she yet felt so pleased at the idea that Charles bore her no resentment, and so gratified by his and her uncle's kindness, that she was the more able to make exertions to repay their affection.

CHAP. VI.

As air, exercise, and amusement, were the chief remedies prescribed for Sidney, she now went out every day to the country, either with Mrs. Montague or Charles; and as she was positively forbid to mix in large parties, or exhaust her returning strength, the cessation from overstrained exertions to appear cheerful while her heart was corroded with sorrow, joined to her determination to exert all the fortitude she could command, so far restored her health, that in some days she felt more free from internal fever than she had done for several preceding weeks, though no effort could remove the settled, though silent, dejection that hung on her spirits, resisting alike her own endeavours and the kind attention of her friends.

Mr. Montague, extremely anxious to return to the country, and thinking change of air would be serviceable to Sidney's health, de-

clared his intention of setting out for Belle Vue in the course of a fortnight ; but as Mrs. Montague daily expected Lady Beauchamp's arrival, and was therefore averse to quit town so immediately, he consented at her request to defer the removal of the family till June. This resolution was still farther enforced by the necessity Sidney's lawyer urged for both his and her presence during the continuance of the term ; and, as she now wanted only a few days of being of age, he, though reluctantly, consented to postpone his departure while there was any chance of his being serviceable towards the farther prosecution of a suit which the Hamiltons were every day involving in tenfold intricacy and obscurity.

A day or two before the period, which Lady Beauchamp had mentioned for her return to town, she arrived at her house in Merrion-square, nearly opposite her father's, and which had, by Mrs. Talbot's directions, been furnished in a style of magnificence fully adequate to the fortune she had brought Sir Townly.

As she did not arrive till late in the evening,

no part of the family had even a wish to see her except her mother, who, on hearing she was in town, immediately set out for her house, attended by a servant, feeling a dislike to ask her son to accompany her, who had expressly declared his determination of avoiding any sort of private intercourse with the Beauchamps. As Sir Townly had gone out immediately after his arrival, Mrs. Montague sat with her daughter to a late hour, delighted to see her, and extremely pleased at the relation she gave of all the attention she received from Lord Mount Eagle, and the different branches of Sir Townly's family ; and infinitely more gratified by the recital she made of Sir Townly's tender affection, who, she declared, was in every respect just such a character as was calculated to render her perfectly happy.

This information Mrs. Montague with unaffected pleasure related to Sidney next morning, declaring how happy she felt at finding her fears of Fanny's future happiness had been so ill founded ; and, though Sidney could not trust implicitly to present appearances, she sincerely sympathized in her feelings, indulging

a hope Sir Townly's character had been too harshly censured by those who had spoken of him in such terms of reprehension to Mr. Montague and Charles.

Eager to display her magnificent equipage to her family, Lady Beauchamp drove early to her father's, to pay a visit to Sidney, to whom Mrs. Montague had requested this attention, certain that it would gratify Mr. Montague and Charles, though forbearing to mention this as her motive. Fanny feeling no inclination to refuse a concession so trifling in itself, and that accorded with her own wish of piquing Sidney and Anna by a description of the splendid scenes in which she had been a performer since her parting with them.

As Charles had returned to the house early, to take Sidney out in his curricle, he was sitting in the drawing-room. On Lady Beauchamp's entrance, who, losing all remembrance of their late quarrels in her present triumph, hurried forward to meet and embrace him as if nothing of the kind had ever occurred between them, Charles, forgot his resentment in momentary surprise at conduct he had so little ex-

pected, and received and returned her embrace with as little appearance of displeasure as she had herself evinced. Though he almost instantly repented having done so, he forbore to express his feelings on perceiving by his mother's countenance the pleasure she felt at the sort of silent reconciliation that had taken place between her children.

Lady Beauchamp then advanced towards Sidney, and, after slightly embracing her, exclaimed, "What on earth can have altered you so much, Sidney? I declare I should have scarcely known you; you have quite lost your colour, and look the very picture of death and despair."

"I am sorry for it," replied Sidney, blushing, and much agitated by her remark; "but neither our looks nor health are exactly in our own power."

"No, certainly they are not," said Lady Beauchamp, with a contemptuous smile; "for I am well convinced; if they were, yours would not be exactly what they are at present; but I declare I wonder how you can grieve so much at trifles."

"The virtues of patience and fortitude," said Miss Watkins, gravely encouraged by Lady Beauchamp's sneers to lay aside the cautious prudence with which she had latterly behaved to Sidney, from observing how high a place she held, not only in Mr. Montague's, but in her sister's esteem and affection, "are very rarely to be met in the world; and young ladies in general hold them as entirely unworthy to find a place in their catalogue of duties, till too late taught to repent their folly by finding themselves deserted by all those charms a proper use of them might have so much longer preserved, and the consequent advantages they might have secured."

"I believe," cried Charles, provoked by these two speeches, "the virtues of patience and fortitude cannot be more rarely found to exist than those of feeling and delicacy; and, however Sidney may have chanced to possess the latter, she has, I fancy, rather more of the former, than to sit down to bewail the transient loss of colour occasioned by a few days' accidental illness. You and Lady Beauchamp will therefore, I hope, have the goodness to

spare any farther condolements or advice, which I am not inclined to think will prove either very useful or consolatory."

"I assure you," said Lady Beauchamp with a look of disdain;" I had no intention of offering either one or the other; I came to see Sidney because mamma told me she had been ill, and have a great deal too much to occupy my mind at present to think of giving advice I am sure she would not follow, after so obstinately refusing to be guided by my papa's."

"In doing so," said Charles, fixing his eyes on Lady Beauchamp, and smiling contemptuously, "she has so bright an example to plead, that Lady Beauchamp is the last person I should have suspected would have become her accuser."

Fanny had not yet studied sufficiently under Sir Townly's tuition to forbear blushing at this pointed reflection; and unable, at that moment, to devise any answer she thought sufficiently expressive of her contempt of his opinion, and her displeasure at his venturing to treat her with so little ceremony in despite of all her lately-acquired consequence, addressing her

mother, asked if she would go out and take a drive with her.

Mrs. Montague, vexed at this renewal of hostilities between her son and daughter, instead of replying to her question, endeavoured to promote a conversation that might produce some harmony between them, expressing her pleasure at her having passed her time while in the country so much to her satisfaction.

The mention of the country recalled to Fanny the latent motive that had prompted her visit, and with silly volubility she retailed all the distinctions that had been paid to her by Sir Townly's friends, displaying such a portion of newly-acquired ostentation and importance, as merely served to confirm the disgust her attack on Sidney had renewed in Charles's mind; and, growing excessively weary of her conversation, he very soon rose, and ordered his curricles to the door.

Scarcely had he returned to his seat when Mr. Montague entered, and, unapprized of Lady Beauchamp's being in the room, started and changed colour on seeing her; but as she instantly advanced to embrace him, with as

little appearance of remembering that she had ever incurred his resentment as she had evinced on her meeting with her brother, Mr. Montague, felt unable to repulse her; though he treated her with a cold and haughty formality that effectually compelled her to silence, and rendered her extremely impatient to hasten her mother's departure, that she might quit a scene where she had not been treated with the deference and respect which she thought herself so well entitled to receive, and which Sir Townly's friends had felt extremely well disposed to pay her.

The moment Charles's curricle came to the door, he carelessly wished Fanny good morning, and, hurrying Sidney along with him, they set out on their drive. When they were a little way out of town, Charles, thinking her sufficiently recovered to speak on a subject he had so long forborene to touch on, asked her what determination she had formed respecting Mr. Savage, or whether she intended to be guided by his advice.

“ I have ever wished to follow your advice,

Charles," cried she ; " but in this instance I cannot even attempt it."

" The attempt," cried he coolly, " will be very easy, and the success very certain, if you will only resolve to make the effort. The state of your health has thus long prevented me from mentioning a subject, which, I feared, might agitate you ; but as that cannot now be injured by calmly giving you my opinion, though it may be irreparably destroyed by suffering the illusion to continue in which you have too long indulged, I will no longer hesitate. I am perfectly acquainted with your communications to Savage, and I am also aware of the cause of your late illness ; but do not," continued he, observing her grow even paler than before, on hearing him say this ; " apprehend any reproach from me on this subject ; no such intention prompts my present conduct, the purest regard to your happiness alone, which I cannot bear to see you so wantonly sacrifice to a man unworthy of your regard."

" Why," cried Sidney, with great emotion, " will you say this ? How has Major Sedley

forfeited the friendship you formerly professed for him ; how is it that he appears to have fallen so wholly in your esteem and good opinion ?”

“ That I now view him with sentiments very different from those of the friendship I formerly felt for him,” cried Charles, with a heightened colour, “ is most certain, though on what grounds it is needless to say ; but I ask you, Sidney, are you determined to sacrifice the happiness of your life, merely to preserve romantic constancy to a man, to whom you never can or will be united ?”

“ This is a cruel, a most cruel question to ask,” exclaimed she : “ after avowing your knowledge of his present situation, and of my feelings, do you wish me,” she continued, with a wildness in her countenance, that alarmed Charles, “ to insult his very ashes, by having my marriage ceremony, and his funeral one, performed, perhaps, at the same moment ? Is this the conduct you would deem prudent and proper ?”

“ What chimera has bewildered your judgment, or infatuated your imagination,” demand-

ed Charles, “that you suffer yourself to become the prey of such idle fancies? Is it a matter of course, that because Sedley, like hundreds, thousands of others, has gone to serve abroad, he never can return? What is now so certainly to ensure his destruction, after having been for so many years before exposed to equal dangers?”

Ashamed of the weakness she had involuntarily betrayed, Sidney replied, “Forgive my weakness, my dear Charles; but from you I do not wish to disguise my feelings.”

“I should be sorry to think you had even an inclination to do so,” said he, “as on your candour and sincerity I have abundant reason to place the utmost reliance. I will now unfold my sentiments with equal freedom, and, for the last time, discuss a subject that has given me more uneasiness than perhaps you are aware of: will you listen to me with calmness, and allow my advice or rather my arguments to have that weight, which, were you unprejudiced, you would acknowledge they ought to have?”

“I can make no promise,” cried Sidney,

" except to listen to you with the best disposition, to act right."

" This is all I desire," replied he, with great animation ; " and, whatever pain my sincerity may at present give you, rest assured, if you allow truth to have its due influence, it will save you from unavailing mortification and uneasiness in future. You asked me, why my sentiments of Sedley were so much changed : I will candidly tell you ; because he has rendered himself unworthy of the your affection."

" In what instance has his conduct proved him so ? Formerly you were of a very different opinion."

" Because," cried Charles, eagerly, " I formerly thought him very sincerely attached to you."

" And what," demanded Sidney, with a degree of emotion she could not restrain, " has induced you to change that opinion ?"

" His own conduct. Had he preserved that affection for you he once professed, would he have acted the part he has done ? Would he, without making a single application to his

friends, have gone off in a fit of sullen pride to the continent, to shew to you and to the world that he wished to forget you? Does this deserve that you should give him a place in your remembrance?"

"Charles," exclaimed Sidney, wounded to the soul by this speech, "do you then so totally forget the letter my uncle obliged me to write,—or your's to Captain Elmore, declining his acquaintance, in order to prevent a possibility of allowing the Major through his means to gather my sentiments, or to make any efforts at conciliation,—and your own and my uncle's violent displeasure? Surely you cannot remember all this, and blame Sedley for conduct necessity enforced."

"I remember it all perfectly," replied he, "I have in no one instance changed my opinion on the subject; and do not infer from any thing I have said that there has been any alteration in my sentiments, or those of my father; they are, and ever must be, unalterably the same. But, my dear Sidney, I know more of young men than you possibly can, and am not inclined to give them credit for

that punctilious sense of duty and propriety which you seem to consider has alone actuated Sedley. Had he wished you to remember him, depend on it he would have found some means of conveying his wishes. That he has not done so I cannot doubt; for you would not, I am convinced, have deceived me: but, however unsuccessful his efforts might have been, his not making even the attempt affords strong grounds to think he wanted the inclination. Of his private affairs I know very little, but I understood from Elmore, that he and his father lived on friendly terms, and that he had always been allowed to be very much his own master; nor is Sedley precisely at that age to shew such blind submission to a father's authority as to suffer him to interpose in such an affair without an effort at least to contend with him. All his endeavours might have been fruitless but the man who could so easily have resigned hope, must also as easily have resigned his wishes."

"Are these your own sentiments, Charles?" asked Sidney, in a very low voice; "and can

you blame Sedley for not practising conduct which you would have so violently resented?"

"They are my own sentiments," exclaimed he warmly; "whose do you suppose I should think worth repeating? Sedley's conduct, believe me, I do not wish to have had other than it has been; but, since he is so perfectly ready to submit to his father's decision, and seems to consider, that, neither directly nor indirectly, he is called on to offer the slightest apology for his father's conduct; that, whatever pain the disappointment might have given to his heart or his pride, the only proper part to pursue was going abroad, to lose all remembrance of the past in the tumult and hurry of a camp; I have no desire to remember an acquaintance he seems so anxious to forget, and would have buried all recollection of him in the same disdainful silence he has himself observed, had not a wish to serve you induced me to mention the subject;—I cannot endure the idea that you should be considered by the world as lamenting a man, who has evinced so little wish to

remember you. I do not say this to wound your feelings ; believe me I have no such intention, as I sincerely regret your having fallen in the way of one, who, with such undoubted claims to admiration and esteem, was of too cold and proud a disposition to be capable of returning the affection he was but too well calculated to inspire ; nor does my wish of your marrying Savage influence my present opinions, as your resolution with respect to him, I leave entirely to your own prudence and to his merit ; but, Sidney, as you value your own peace, as you value my future esteem, and affection, do not any farther sacrifice your own delicacy or the pride of your family.

In the light Charles now represented Sedley's conduct, it had never before been presented to Sidney's imagination, and every feeling of pride and affection was wounded to the quick. How far it deserved such censure she was not calm enough to consider, though she felt the injustice of saying that he ought to have acted in such a manner as would have alike exposed him to the resentment of his family and of her's, without even a chance

of accomplishing his wishes ; but, unable to make any farther effort to combat Charles's harangue, which pride and agitation alike forbade her to attempt, she remained silent till Charles desired to hear her opinion of what he had been saying, and whether she now saw Sedley's conduct in the same light that he did.

" I cannot say what my opinion, what my feelings are," cried she, greatly agitated " all I can now wish is, that I had never known him, as I can never cease to regret the insults to which I have perhaps subjected myself and my family."

" Since such are your feelings," cried he, vehemently, " shew the spirit, the resolution, worthy of you, by wholly banishing from your heart the man who first exposed you to them, and then took such prudent care of his own pride, and shewed such proper and dutiful obedience to a father; who, however he may be a man of family and fortune, has not, most assuredly, the feelings of a gentleman. Do this, and I will be satisfied ; and through life you may command my warmest

affection, and every service I can render you ; —do not, Sidney, forfeit the friendship of one who so sincerely loves you, for the haughty and cold-blooded Sedley, who, if his own pride is spared, can readily trample on the feelings of his friends."

"I will, as far as I can, in every instance endeavour to deserve your friendship," cried she, in a low and suffocated voice ; "but I beg, Charles, you will change the subject ; it is one I can no longer bear to hear discussed."

"You deserve, and shall ever command all the friendship I am capable of feeling," replied he, with great energy, taking these words as a full assent to follow his advice : "never shall you hear from me any farther allusion to a subject, that I know gives you pain, and which I sincerely regret my having been compelled to inflict. With respect to Savage, I leave you to act as time and your own wishes shall direct ; though I cannot forbear encouraging the hope that his truly generous attachment will at last meet its due reward, and that, when you become thoroughly acquainted

with his character, you will estimate him as he deserves."

With every pulse throbbing with the tumultuous feelings of wounded pride and disappointed tenderness, Sidney sickened with disgust at the very name of affection, and, while the glow of resentment crimsoned her cheek, she replied, "Let not Mr. Savage nor even you, hereafter attach blame to me, if you find yourselves disappointed in forming hopes I have never in any degree authorized. With respect to him, I hold myself, and will hold myself, perfectly free; and, if either his pride or his feelings are wounded by his persevering in a pursuit so little worth his attention, he can, I repeat, have no person but himself to blame."

Charles was far from being displeased at the uncommon asperity with which Sidney spoke, infinitely preferring she should feel anger rather than sorrow; and he replied, "After your own declaration to Savage, he never can attach the slightest blame to you; nor will you find me disposed to censure you, as I know not the

woman of whom I have so high an opinion ; and though Savage will spend some part of the summer with me at Belle Vue, do not entertain any apprehensions of duplicity on either his part or mine. Whatever may be my wishes, and however I may hope that they will influence you, and that Savage may hereafter meet the return of affection he deserves, to your own inclination I leave you, and shall consider you as free as I consider myself ; and on those terms alone can Savage become my guest."

Satisfied with this declaration, Sidney made no objection to Mr. Savage's visit. Disgusted with herself, with Sedley, with the whole world, she cared not at that moment where, or in whose society, she spent the remainder of her life ; and felt no other wish or anxiety than to preserve her freedom, and guard her honour from impeachment ; as, if she had been deceived in the perfect reliance she had placed in Sedley's tenderness, never could she again feel confidence or regard for any human being, nor could now feel very anxious to preserve Mr. Savage from danger, when so

painfully convinced how easily even the man on whom she had so fondly fixed her affections could forget and resign her.

Charles drove on in silence, as he did not wish her any farther to exert her spirits by endeavouring to disguise her feelings, and was anxious to give her full leisure to reflect on all he had said, which, however unwilling to give her pain, he had felt equally necessary to her peace and his own pride. As, from the moment he had discovered that she still continued to view Sedley with all her former affection, he had with jealous attention watched her actions, and incessantly reflected on the possibility of their carrying on a clandestine correspondence, though his confidence in her honour rendered him very averse to entertain so injurious a suspicion; but, every doubt was removed by the shock she had received, on hearing he was gone abroad, which so fully shewed how ignorant she was of his proceedings. He reviewed Sedley's conduct through the whole affair, and, in despite of the accounts he had, through different channels, heard, of how much he had suffered,

and how greatly he was altered, he could no longer consider him as feeling any attachment for Sidney ; concluding those who related such anecdotes had merely indulged their curiosity to ascertain his sentiments, and gratified their love of magnifying, and painting to their own fancy, every trivial occurrence that could give them an opportunity of indulging the general love for the marvellous and pathetic. That any man could feel so much without making any effort to alleviate his sufferings, he could not credit, and from Mr. Elverton he had learned that Sedley had not gone to either his father's or uncle's at the time he had left C—, on receiving Mr. Montague's letter; but had merely taken a tour round the kingdom, and had not afterwards quitted his regiment, till he did so for the purpose of negotiating his own and Captain Elmore's exchange into another going to Spain ; when, though he had accidentally seen them in the street, neither had made the slightest effort to approach or speak to him. How then did this conduct assimilate with such ardour of attachment as he had professed ? How, if still

anxious to ensure Sidney's peace, and to hold the place he had appeared so anxious to obtain in her affections, would he have voluntarily abandoned the country in which she resided, without making a single exertion to inform her of his intentions, to preserve her from meeting the shock she had received, or to know whether or not she approved of such a step? Such conduct was incompatible with the extravagance of sorrow which he was represented to have felt, and he could not in reason believe it any thing more than the exaggerations of rumour. All he could rationally suppose was, that, after the first feelings of disappointment had subsided, he had quietly acquiesced in his father's wishes ; and, either to gratify him, to banish the affair wholly from his own mind, or to suffer it to sink quietly into oblivion, he had resolved to go abroad : no other suggestion seemed probable, and on none other could Charles fix. With a degree of anger at the conviction which tenderness to Sidney had alone induced him to moderate, he had avowed his opinions, certain that, if once assured it was Sedley's wish to

forget her, her own pride and spirit would render the task of forgetting him easy ; and he enjoyed the purest pleasure in the hope that she would soon transfer her regard to one so infinitely more deserving her affection, to whom no objection could be made, and with whom no obstacle intervened to prevent or retard her happy and eligible settlement in life.

Sidney, though glad to be spared the effort of endeavouring to support uninteresting conversation, when her mind was in such a state of disorder, found every attempt to calm her feelings, or regulate her thoughts, vain. That Sedley should wish to forget her, that all she had heard and believed of his sufferings should have been false, she knew not how to credit ; nor could she remain insensible to the truth of what Charles had urged ; for, though to her it had never appeared in such a light till thus painted by him, yet she had wondered at his going abroad without taking some means of apprizing her of his intentions ; and that, if he had desired her to remember him, he should not have devised some means of conveying his wishes, and ascertaining her feeling : she could

in short no longer shut her eyes to those apparent inconsistencies.

The pain this conviction gave her was too severe to suffer her to dwell long on the subject, and she incessantly tormented herself to find some reason for his conduct, without being able to fix on any that appeared rational. In this state of ferment her mind still continued, when they were met, as they were returning to town, by Mr. Savage.

The intuitive disgust Sidney now felt to the very name or idea of love, or to any man who appeared in the character of a lover, she found it so impossible to repress, that she received Mr. Savage's compliments of inquiry with a degree of coldness almost bordering on incivility.

Surprised and offended by a reception such as he had never before received, Mr. Savage looked at Charles for an explanation, who, not choosing to give him any, talked to him as usual, without seeming to observe his uneasiness, till observing his attention occupied in watching, or appearing to watch, some vessels crossing the Bay, he directed such a look

of reproach to Sidney, as restored her to a recollection of the impropriety she was committing in thus publicly betraying feelings she could not avoid considering as degrading, if not disgraceful. She immediately forced herself to enter into conversation with both, anxious to atone for the offence she had given Mr. Savage ; and, to account for the oddity of her manner, she pleaded a severe head-ache.

This return to herself, and the desire she evinced of behaving as usual, quickly banished all resentment from Mr. Savage's mind, though little was the pleasure he could derive from the change to mere politeness, or from the observation he could not avoid making, that even that was a painful effort ; till, at length soothed by the idea that some domestic circumstance had occurred to harass her, he concluded that, when she recovered from the chagrin it had occasioned, she would resume the same ease and friendliness with which she had hitherto treated him. The pride that had led him so highly to rate his own pretensions as to suspect almost every woman he knew of forming designs upon his heart, and

which, a thorough knowledge of the world had not served to lessen, now impelled him to the pursuit of one who seemed little desirous of his attention ; since he could not endure the idea that the woman he had selected should remain insensible to his attractions, or refuse him the possession of a heart he thought himself so well entitled to obtain. Thus, like thousands of others who yield to the blind guidance of their passions, he pursued a line of conduct that was the very reverse of what might be expected from his character ; and, with the general perverseness of human nature, he prized the object in proportion to the difficulty of obtaining it. The woman he would perhaps have despised, had she with weak imprudence become fascinated by the brilliancy of his talents, he now assiduously sought, from considering it a more peculiar degree of honour to triumph over her affection for another ; though, like all other fallible creatures, he was ignorant of the real feelings that guided him, attributing his eagerness to the unconquerable attachment he felt for her.

When time and reflection had calmed the

first tumult of Sidney's feelings, she made the most vigorous efforts to recover her tranquillity, and to attain that degree of fortitude and resignation which pride and propriety so loudly called on her to exert. No selfish, no interested motive, could have guided Charles in giving her the opinion he had advanced of the feelings that had influenced Sedley, as he had explicitly declared he would leave her perfectly at liberty to act as she pleased with regard to Mr. Savage, and would never seek to involve her in any engagement contrary to her wishes; and on his honour and candour she had the best grounded and most implicit reliance. As, however resentment might warp it, it would never lead him to commit wilful injustice, his opinion made an indelible impression on her mind, and she became convinced that resentment at her letter, together with Captain Elmore's advice, had induced Sedley to give up the affair even in his own wishes, and had prompted the resolution of going abroad till he had perfectly recovered from any remaining uneasiness he might feel. Though she could not so far con-

quer her tenderness as to cease lamenting the dangers to which he was exposed, she felt it due to herself, and to her family, to subdue feelings so injurious to the peace and delicacy of both. Though alternately the prey of resentment and regret, which she felt herself totally inadequate to overcome, she gave no weak encouragement to such emotions, but joined, as much as her health would permit, in society; and as that was now very tolerable, her friends no longer opposed her going into public as usual. Charles, delighted at this determination, eagerly promoted every plan of amusement which he thought most likely to entertain her.

CHAP. VII.

MRS. MONTAGUE, desirous to gratify Lady Beauchamp, gave several splendid parties in honour of her nuptials, neither Mr. Montague nor Charles interfering to prevent her ; though they continued to treat Sir Townly with the most distant reserve, who behaved to both with a sort of careless defiance that served still farther to increase their disgust, and confirmed them in their resolution of wholly avoiding any private intercourse with him ; though they consented so far to oblige Mrs. Montague as to attend one or two brilliant assemblies at Lady Beauchamp's house ; and, as Sir Townly made no advances towards claiming any brotherly friendship with Charles, he was content to restrain himself so far as to behave to him with outward civility. Sidney, however reluctant to enter the house of a woman who had uniformly treated her with rudeness

and ill nature, did not think it proper to refuse the invitations that Lady Beauchamp, with all due form, sent her, from an eagerness to display her splendour, and to make Sidney in turn feel some portion of that envy she had formerly indulged towards her, on discovering she had supplanted her in Major Sedley's admiration and regard.

Her wishes on this subject, like most other malevolent ones, failed to produce any other effect than mortification to herself, as Sidney, never disposed to envy the happiness of others, however anxious to secure her own, was now in a state of mind less likely than ever to place much value on outward splendour ; and her indifference equally offended and disappointed Lady Beauchamp, who could never feel perfect satisfaction in the enjoyment of any advantage which she did not find of sufficient consequence to attract the envy as well as the admiration of others, but more particularly of her whom she had ever felt so ardent a desire to eclipse.

The anxiety she felt on this subject was soon sunk in one that more immediately interested her feelings, and promised to put a brief period

to all her ill-founded expectations of supreme felicity. Sidney understood from Anna that Fanny made frequent complaints to her mother, that, since her coming to town, Sir Townly had spent very little of his time at home, and generally stayed out to a very late hour: that he seemed by no means pleased at her remonstrances, and hinted that he considered himself entitled to act as he thought proper, when she was allowed a similar liberty.

The observation Sidney made, that Mrs. Montague appeared dejected and unhappy, confirmed the truth of Anna's information, which she had no reason to hope could be exaggerated; and feeling Lady Beauchamp's conduct, in so obstinately persisting to follow her own judgment in opposition to the wishes and advice of her friends, a striking lesson to herself, however different the circumstances in which they were placed, and whatever little similarity there ever had been in their dispositions, she endeavoured to profit by her example in avoiding that chance of rendering herself wilfully miserable. Though happiness she considered as for ever removed from her reach,

instead of selfishly consulting her feelings by confining all her thoughts to her own affairs, she directed her efforts to sooth Mrs. Montague, and to repay the kindness she had latterly received. Mrs. Montague, conscious of the implicit confidence she might place in her, and certain of meeting tenderness, if not consolation, in confiding to her the cause of her uneasiness, at length communicated her fears that all the prognostics of the misery Fanny was wilfully encountering by her marriage with Sir Townly Beauchamp would prove but too well founded, as they now had continual disputes about his frequent absences from home, and that Sir Townly was gradually beginning to throw off the mask of tenderness and respect he had hitherto worn. "Fanny tells me," continued Mrs. Montague with great emotion, "that Sir Townly now passes the principal part of every night abroad, and scarcely ever returns till near morning; and that when she reproaches him with his neglect, as she almost continually sits up till his return, he merely replies by violently declaring he will act as he pleases, not being a man to be tied to the apron-

string of a wife ; and when, as it is but too frequently the case, he comes home in a state of intoxication, he is even less reserved in his expressions, treating her with mingled contempt and brutality. I have repeatedly advised Fanny, since she is so unfortunately married to him, to try and render herself as happy as she can now be, by permitting Sir Townly to follow his own inclinations, and to forbear reproaches that can answer no other end than to incense him ; but, as fatally as ever determined to be guided by her own judgment, she has rejected my advice. Yet her infatuated attachment still continues unaltered, and though she upbraids him and complains to me, she would sacrifice the world to please him, and even accuses me for my indifference, though she will the next moment censure him in the bitterest terms. Oh, that I knew how to act ! or that to your uncle I could speak my fears !—But he would not listen to me ; and from Charles I could yet less expect assistance or advice, after the multiplied provocations he has received from Sir Townly, and, by his desire, from his unhappy sister ; but if Sir Townly, when not yet two

months married, can treat his wife with such neglect, such absolute brutality, what happiness is she to expect in her progress through life with him? How much do I now regret I ever interfered—ever used my influence with your uncle to persuade him to acquiesce in this marriage! But I could not then in any way foresee what has occurred."

" My dear aunt," cried Sidney, tenderly; " why should you regret that your mediation has preserved your daughter, and your family, from becoming subjects of public animadversion? No entreaties, no arguments, could induce Fanny to yield up her resolution of marrying Sir Townly; and that she did so with propriety in the eyes of the world may possibly be serviceable to her, and certainly will to Anna, but cannot in any degree have accelerated or produced her present uneasiness. I know, I feel, continued she, involuntarily sighing, " the inefficacy of argument to lessen unhappiness, yet permit me to entreat you will not render yourself needlessly wretched by allowing the cruel disappointment you have suffered in your favourite child to prey too heavily on your spirits :

time may perhaps convince Fanny of the utility of reproaches which cannot avail towards promoting her wishes, and time may also induce Sir Townly for his own sake, for the sake of propriety, to be more guarded in his conduct."

" I can no longer form such hopes," cried Mrs. Montague, weeping ; " my unhappy child has doomed herself to misery for life ; for how will she, accustomed to such tenderness from her father, such kindness, such good humour from her family, be enabled to bear with the temper and disposition of the man she has so unfortunately selected for her husband ? I feel consoled from the conviction you have so kindly impressed on my mind, that my interference may have been useful to Anna, but cannot in any degree have promoted the unhappiness I lament ; but oh, I know the world too well, am too well acquainted with how little any man can bear to be advised or controlled, not to feel the keenest apprehensions for the consequences of Fanny's imprudence in hoping by such means to reform Sir Townly. That any conduct she could pursue would have that effect I have, alas ! very little

hope ; but I cannot doubt that reproach and ill-humour will subject her to brutality, which makes me shudder to think there can be a possibility of her encountering."

The apprehensions Mrs. Montague expressed were too rational, her uneasiness too well founded, and her feelings too acute, to permit Sidney to attempt consolation she had it not in her power to afford, and that she felt it would be useless even to offer ; she could only therefore mingle her tears, with her's, and bewail the numerous ills that render this world a scene of trial and suffering, even to those most blest by nature and fortune with every worldly advantage.

Soothed by her tenderness and sympathy, and relieved by having poured forth her sorrows into the bosom of a friend so anxiously desirous to mitigate her uneasiness, Mrs. Montague grew more composed ; and, compelled to the exertion of superintending the arrangement of her house, and receiving the numerous visitors who hourly crowded it, she had not leisure long to indulge reflections so wounding to her peace.

Sidney, anxious to profit by every opportunity

afforded her of acquiring fortitude and resignation, and recovering some tranquillity on finding sorrow so inseparable an attendant on human frailty, endeavoured to compose her mind to bear with patience her allotted portion ; and by general tenderness and kindness to all her fellow-creatures, who came within her sphere of action, and by administering their sorrows, she gained a comparative peace of mind which amply rewarded her for the exertion.

A few days after this conversation, as she was sitting in the drawing-room waiting for Charles, who had gone to his room to settle some business preparatory to his going out with her, the drawing-room door was suddenly thrown open to Lady Beauchamp, who, advancing hastily into the room, threw herself on a sofa, and bursting into a passion of tears, exclaimed, “ Oh, mamma, what shall I do? what will become of me ? ”

“ What has occurred thus to agitate you, my dearest love ? ” cried Mrs. Montague, much alarmed ; “ tell me, Fanny—pray relieve my fears.”

"Sir Townly has not been at home all night," exclaimed Fanny; "and, though I have sent his servant all over the town to inquire after him, we cannot discover where he is. Oh, mamma, I am terrified to death; I am afraid some dreadful accident has befallen him."

Mrs. Montague, somewhat relieved by hearing the cause of her violent distress, tried to calm her by assurances that she had no cause for apprehension, as it was probable Sir Townly might have gone out of town for the night, and would return in the course of the day.

"Oh, no, mamma, he has not," exclaimed Fanny, sobbing violently; "he left me last night, though I did all I could to prevent him, and went out with Mr. Hamilton, and a party of his odious friends that dined with him yesterday, and I have never seen him since, nor does Mrs. Talbot, Mrs. Hamilton, or any person I sent to, know any thing of him."

Mrs. Montague, who could feel little surprised at the absence of a man, who she well knew spent many nights at the gaming-table, endeavoured to console Fanny with a hope that he would return in the course of the day, though

without mentioning her suspicions of where he had passed the night; while Sidney, with wonder and pity at her folly, after being so well informed of Sir Townly's character and conduct, sat silent, knowing any interference from her would merely produce irritation and retort from Lady Beauchamp. Anna, scarcely able to restrain a laugh on hearing what she considered so inefficient a cause assigned for her sister's extreme sorrow, turned to a window to avoid her mother's observation.

Far from being consoled by Mrs. Montague's tenderness or arguments, Fanny listened to them with impatience, and replied by accusing her of unfeeling insensibility to her distress. Mrs. Montague, harassed and provoked, at length sat silent, when Miss Watkins, unable any longer to contain herself, broke forth into half-expressed censures of Fanny for so obstinately insisting on marrying a man so little likely to render her happy, and so disagreeable to her friends.

Fanny enraged by her animadversions, with unrestrained acrimony resented her censures, desiring her to forbear any interference with

one who despised as much as she disliked her. Miss Watkins, too much exasperated to reply, left the room, when Fanny's anger again subsided into tears and lamentations.

Charles, on coming in, was surprised, and, in spite of his resentment to Fanny, somewhat affected at seeing her weep so bitterly, and, with more kindness than he had for weeks addressed her, he inquired what had occurred to distress her so seriously.

Fanny, checking her tears, gave him the same account she had already given to her mother, concluding with a request that he would himself go in search of Sir Townly, as he would be a great deal more likely to obtain information respecting him than she could hope to learn through the medium of a servant.

Scarcely less astonished at her folly in giving way to such immoderate sorrow for an occurrence his repeated warnings respecting Sir Townly's well known passion for gambling must have so well prepared her to expect, than offended by her making him such a request, Charles drily exclaimed, "How can you suppose that I will degrade myself by going in

search of Sir Townly Beauchamp? or how, after all I told you, all you knew to be true, though you thought proper to accuse me of falsehood for giving you the information, can you now give way to such useless sorrow, because Sir Townly chooses to pass his nights at the gaming-table?"

"Oh, no, Charles, he is in no such place," cried Fanny, suppressing her displeasure, because she required his assistance; "perhaps he has been killed. Oh, do go and try to find out where he is; surely you may take so much trouble to oblige me."

"I cannot, or will not, go in search of him," replied Charles; "he is perfectly adequate to take care of himself, let him have passed his night where he may; nor will I degrade myself by making inquiries about a man it is disgraceful to be connected with, or subject myself to be insulted by him before his infamous associates; nor should you, for your own sake, desire it."

Unable longer to command her temper, even to gain a favourite point, Lady Beauchamp burst forth into exclamations of abuse and re-

proach of Charles, nor could all her mother's efforts avail to silence or restrain her.

Charles, unwilling farther to harass Mrs. Montague, forbore to reply, and, turning to Sidney, told her to come and take a turn in the square with him till Mr. Savage's arrival, who was to ride with Anna. Sidney, certain no good consequences could accrue from his longer continuance in the room, rose and accompanied him, -Lady Beauchamp exclaiming, as they went away, she wondered how her papa and mamma could possibly be blind to Sidney's conduct, who so incessantly laboured to sow dissensions in their family, and instigated her brother to treat her ill; but he and they would yet repent their infatuation.

To these ravings of passion Sidney disdained to reply, and hurried on Charles, who seemed inclined to stop, and notice what Lady Beauchamp had said.

" You are not, I hope, offended at what Lady Beauchamp has said," cried he, on getting into the street; " you must now be a tolerable judge of the goodness of her heart and temper; yet, weak and perverse as she is, she

had better recollect my declaration, that as Lady Beauchamp, and Lady Beauchamp alone, will I ever in future regard and treat her."

"Far from feeling resentment," cried Sidney, "I feel nothing but pity; her petulance is now more pardonable than it ever was, for now she has, I fear, irreparably injured her happiness."

"She deserves no pity," cried he vehemently; "she has wilfully encountered her own fate; she was not left in ignorance of Sir Townly's practices and principles before she married him; she would do so, and must only bear the consequences. Much will she find herself mistaken if she expects even the trifling alleviation that personal kindness could offer for his vice and profligacy: little of the tenderness she formerly met with from my father, whom she well rewarded for it, need she now expect from him, and this I also told her."

"The more certainly that she will be miserable," said Sidney sighing; "the more deserving she is of pity; and that she has doomed herself to wretchedness will not make her feel it less."

"No," replied Charles, after a pause, "it certainly will not; but there is in Fanny's disposition, an ill-nature, a frowardness, and folly, that must blunt the feelings her wretched fate would otherwise excite."

He then changed the subject, and they were in a few moments joined by Mr. Savage. Charles, desiring a servant to call Anna, was preparing to hand Sidney into the curricle, when Mr. Savage, with some hesitation, asked him if he had any objection to ride, and suffer him to drive Sidney.

"None in the world," replied he; "I will give you my place with great pleasure."

Sidney, though vexed at this arrangement, which she thought proceeded from a wish in Mr. Savage to render his attentions more pointed and public than he had hitherto deemed prudent, made no opposition; internally resolving that if he made any farther effort to render his views obvious, and thus entangle her in an engagement she was so averse to form, she would decidedly avow her feelings, and then leave him to act as he pleased. With a mind saddened and disgusted by the disappointment

of all her hopes and wishes, she recoiled from the idea of being either led or lured into forming new plans and engagements ; she could not rationally expect that much happiness would ensue from an union formed on the basis of disappointed tenderness and offended pride, however promoted by the advice and representations of friends, who, though anxious for her happiness, could not so well as she could herself estimate her feelings.

Mr. Savage did not take any other advantage of his situation than the pleasure of conversing with her afforded ; he wished to obtain her heart, but not to force her compliance, as on such terms he would have disdained her hand ; and resolving to trust to time, and the advantages a constant intercourse would afford, to obtain his point, he did not even feel a wish to renew his suit till her own change of manner should convince him it was her's also ; and that this change would ere long take place, he sanguinely hoped, as he had been informed by Montague that his rival had left the kingdom, and that Sidney had promised to give up all farther thoughts of him. With all the energy of

newly-revived hope, he conversed with an ease and animation on general subjects that involuntarily induced Sidney to take her part with some freedom ; pleased at the opinion, which she now thought herself justified in forming, that Mr. Savage was recovering his indifference.

On their return to Merrion-square both gentlemen declined going up stairs, as Charles had agreed to dine with Mr. Savage.

Sidney had scarcely changed her dress when Mrs. Montague's woman came with a message from her mistress requesting to see her in her room.

"Oh, Sidney," exclaimed Mrs. Montague the moment she entered, "what a scene I have witnessed ! how wretchedly has my poor Fanny thrown herself away !"

"What has happened ?" cried Sidney, alarmed. "Has Sir Townly returned ? or have you heard any thing of him, that has increased your uneasiness ?"

"He has returned," replied Mrs. Montague, "but never before was I witness of such a scene ; and, when I relate what has passed,

you will then judge of my feelings, of what
the feelings of any mother must be, on such
an occasion. On your going out with Charles,
I proposed to Fanny to return with her to her
house, to learn if Sir Townly had yet come
home, and, if he had not, to take such mea-
sures as might be most prudent to ascertain
where he was. On our arrival we were in-
formed that Sir Townly had returned. Fanny,
though gratified by this intelligence, declared
her resolution of taxing him severely with
the alarm he had given her; and, deaf to
all my entreaties to forbear useless upbraid-
ings, she hurried to the drawing-room, where
she learned he was, and whether I followed,
anxious to try if my presence would prevent
the altercation which I feared her imprudence
would produce. He was lying asleep on the
sofa, and, in defiance of my utmost efforts to
restrain her, Fanny hurried forward, and,
awaking him, eagerly told him of her fright,
and then as vehemently reproached him for
his conduct. Sir Townly, who I believe had
sat up all night, and appeared inflamed with
wine, fell into the most outrageous passion at

being disturbed, and, uncontrolled by my presence, swore at Fanny in the most horrible manner, asking how she dare disturb and torment him. Fanny, completely terrified, remained silent, and Sir Townly, after exhausting his passion in a strain of the grossest invectives, concluded by saying, that if she did not in future restrain her volubility, or if she ever again ventured to interfere with or tease him by her folly, she should suffer severely for her imprudence. Oh Sidney, think what I must have felt at being present at such a scene!"

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Sidney, "can this be possible? Could Sir Townly so far forget himself as to use such language to Fanny, and that too, in your presence?"

"He did," replied Mrs. Montague; "nor was this all: Fanny, overpowered by treatment to which she had been so little accustomed, threw herself into my arms, and burst into tears; when Sir Townly rising from the sofa, where he had again thrown himself, approached, and, regarding her with a smile of contempt, said, "You had better reserve your

tears for some more worthy occasion ; they 'may perhaps soften and deceive your mother, but," added he with an oath, " they will have no effect on me." Then stalking, or rather staggering, to the door, without condescending to utter a word to me as an apology for such conduct, he left the room, and, calling to his servant, told him, in a loud and furious voice, that he was going to his chamber, and not, at his peril, to suffer any person to follow or disturb him. Fanny still continued weeping in my arms, nor could I check my own tears at witnessing such treatment of a child I so tenderly love. It was long before I could succeed in calming her ; but I persuaded her to retire to bed ; beside which I sat till she fell asleep. Ill as you must have thought of Sir Townly, from all my dear Charles told my unfortunate misguided Fanny of his character, could you, Sidney, have believed it possible, that he could have so far outraged all the feelings of a gentleman ? The thought of having my poor child consigned wholly to his mercy makes me shudder with horror. Oh Fanny, how severely will you expiate your

disobedience to your father, and your ingratitude to me!"

Shocked by such a recital, Sidney knew not what to say, what consolation to offer ; she could only sympathize with Mrs. Montague's sufferings at this sad fulfilment of all the gloomy forebodings and warnings which had preceded Fanny's ill-omened marriage with Sir Townly Beauchamp.

Mrs. Montague sat for some time silent, and then said in a low voice, " It is useless to lament what no human power can now undo. Could Fanny have foreseen the consequences, how differently would she have acted ; but all is now over, and we must only endeavour to make the best of what cannot be recalled. I am most anxious that your uncle should hear all I have told you ; his interference might perhaps avail something towards promoting, if not more happiness, at least more decorum ; yet I cannot prevail on myself to mention it to him, or to make such a request ; —would you, therefore, my dear Sidney, to oblige me, convey my wishes to him ? It is, I know, a disagreeable commission, and a task

I should most unwillingly impose on you, was there any other person to whom I could with propriety apply ; but Anna I could not venture to trust ; she is, you know, very giddy, nor would it be proper for her to undertake such an office. To my sister I could not bear to apply ; and to Charles I dread giving even a hint of what has passed, as, whatever may be his resentment to Fanny, Sir Townly's conduct to me would rouse him to such a pitch of passion, that no motives of prudence could restrain him from openly insulting him ; and miserable beyond expression would it make me to hazard the life of a darling and unoffending child, to serve one who never treated me with the duty and affection my dear Charles has ever shewn."

To undertake this commission Sidney felt extremely reluctant, from a dread of her uncle's harshly reproving her for venturing to importune him on the subject ; but, as no selfish feeling ever interfered to prevent her doing aught that had a chance of producing good to others, she agreed to Mrs. Montague's request.

Mrs. Montague gratefully thanked her for a compliance, which she said she knew was disagreeable to her, though too generous to say so; then added, "Do not, my dear Sidney, feel offended, if your uncle refuses to listen to you; I cannot say it will surprise, though it will grieve me, if he does; but such a refusal cannot so cruelly wound my feelings, given through you, as if directly addressed to myself; and your uncle will too well understand the kindness of the motives that prompt your acquiescence with my wishes to feel any resentment to you."

With Mrs. Montague Sidney sat till they were summoned to dinner. Soon after it was over Mrs. Montague returned to the drawing-room, and, calling Sidney aside, told her she would go and see Lady Beauchamp, requesting she would use the opportunity which Charles's absence afforded of mentioning what she had desired to Mr. Montague.

Extremely averse to the task she had undertaken, and at a loss how to introduce the subject, Sidney remained silent after her return to the dining-room, till Mr. Montague,

laying down a newspaper he was reading, asked her if she wished to speak to him ; when, conquering her reluctance, after some little preparation, she told him every particular which her aunt had related, concluding by mentioning Mrs. Montague's request that he would endeavour to induce Fanny to act with more prudence.

Mr. Montague changed colour several times during her recital, and though he evinced many indications of impatience, he forbore to give her any interruption ; but, the moment she had ceased speaking, he hastily said, "Why did not Lucy speak to me herself ? Where is she ?"

"She is gone to see Fanny, sir," said Sidney, "as she was very uneasy about her."

Mr. Montague was silent for some time, and then said, "Since Lucy has not wished to speak to me on this subject, I will not mention it to her ; but tell her on her return that I can or will take no part whatever between Sir Townly Beauchamp and his wife. I no longer consider Fanny as my daughter ; she is Sir Townly's wife : such she is by her own determined ob-

stinacy, and as such she must yield that obedience to him she thought proper to deny to me. Her conduct it is impossible for me to forget ; and never will I, or ought I, to interfere ; but tell Lucy it is my most earnest request that she will not injure her own health and happiness by anxiety about a daughter who has made so base a return to her affection ; and do not again," continued he, suddenly raising his voice, " mention this subject to me, as I will neither permit such an attempt, nor again listen to such a detail."

" I will never again mention it, I assure you, sir," said Sidney ; " nor did any other motive than a wish to oblige my aunt now induce me to do so." • ,

" I do not feel any displeasure to you," returned Mr. Montague, mildly : " I understand and can appreciate the feelings that have impelled your present application ; do not, however, let any consideration lead you, in future to disobey my injunctions."

Sidney declared she would not ; and Mr. Montague remaining silent, she returned to the drawing-room.

At tea, which was in vain delayed for Mrs. Montague, Mr. Montague appeared so much out of spirits, that Sidney regretted she had been induced to give him information that had merely vexed him, without producing any other effect.

About ten o'clock a servant came into the drawing-room with a message from Mrs. Montague, requesting to see her in her room, whither she proceeded.

"I have sent for you, my dear," cried Mrs. Montague, "to ask what answer your uncle has given to my request."

Sidney replied by giving the substance of her conversation with her uncle, noticing his express prohibition of the subject being again mentioned to him.

"This is only what I feared," replied Mrs. Montague sighing: "I know how highly he was offended with Fanny: I am grieved indeed, but not surprised. Oh where can she now turn for consolation!—But though her father's former affection is lost in displeasure, mine is not: I cannot endure to see her so miserable as she must be in the wretched connexion she has

formed ; but I will now relate the conclusion of the morning's scene, as it in some degree sooths me to express my feelings to one, whose kind attention and gentle sweetness I shall ever most gratefully remember."

Sidney thanked her aunt for her confidence and kindness ; and Mrs. Montague then mentioned, that, on her arrival at Lady Beau-champ's, she went to her room, and found her weeping bitterly, as Sir Townly, so far from shewing any inclination to atone for his conduct in the morning, had never once inquired after his lady, but was engaged with a party of gentlemen in the dining-room. "Think, Sidney," continued Mrs. Montague " what must be my feelings on hearing such intelligence; that a man, after such brutal behaviour to his wife, and such improper treatment of me, could, the moment he had slept off intoxication and fatigue, assemble company at his house, without making the slightest effort to apologize to Fanny for his conduct. I endeavoured to disguise my feelings, and to console Fanny, who was now more sensible of my kindness. Taught to feel the value of it by the cruel reverse she had ex-

perienced, she earnestly entreated I would try and procure an accommodation between her and Sir Townly. Though fearful and unwilling to make the effort, as I dreaded any application to such a man, and knew not how to encounter language and behaviour such as I had never before even pictured to my imagination, my regard for my daughter prevailed over my reluctance ; and, after obtaining a promise from Fanny to forbear either reproach or accusation, if I could succeed in inducing Sir Townly to come and see her, as she earnestly desired, I went down stairs, and sent a message to Sir Townly, requesting to see him. Contrary indeed to my expectations, he made his appearance in a few moments ; and addressing me, without seeming to recollect any thing of what had occurred in the morning, begged to be honoured with my commands. Conquering my dislike to the man, and my resentment for his behaviour to myself, I apologized for calling him from his party, which a wish of seeing a reconciliation take place between him and my daughter, before I left the house, had alone induced me to do ; and concluded by a request

that he would accompany me to her room. Sir Townly now appeared to remember the morning's transaction, which he had before seemed to forget, and replied that he should be sorry to offend me, or refuse a request of mine, as I had always treated him with politeness and attention, though my husband and son had behaved so differently ; and therefore, for any offence he had given me, he begged my pardon ; " but your daughter, Mrs Montague," continued he, " must expect no apology from me ; she has acted with great impropriety, and no person can defend her conduct. I am not a man to be teased or governed by a wife, and no woman on earth shall presume to interfere with or control me." He concluded by saying, that though he would not refuse to leave his party to wait on me, his wife deserved no such attention from him, nor would he shew it ; but, if she behaved with propriety, and did not again attempt to interfere with him, he was very willing, when more at leisure, to meet her as usual. Deeply as I was offended by such insolent conduct, and by his refusal to comply with my request, I thought it prudent

to disguise both, and therefore replied, that I intended no vindication of my daughter's conduct ; I required no apology ; but I could not have expected his refusal to see her. Sir Townly hesitated, and after some consideration, said, since it would gratify me, he would attend me up stairs, but could not stay a moment, and with this trifling and unwilling concession I was compelled to appear satisfied, as I dreaded Fanny's immoderate sorrow if I returned alone. I therefore led the way to her apartment, followed by Sir Townly ; and, hurrying into the room before him, requested Fanny would be prudent. I had not time to say more when Sir Townly approached, and said, " I have, Lady Beauchamp, merely to gratify your mother, come to say, I am willing to forget your improper conduct of this morning ; but in her presence I tell you, and remember my words, never while you live presume to act a similar part ; for," continued he, with an horrible oath, " never shall you control or call me to an account :" then added, if she again attempted it, no human being should protect her from his resentment. " I have too long

submitted to your impertinent interference, but I will not do so again. If you act as becomes you, I will say no more of what has passed ;—I can now no longer absent myself from my friends.” Then bowing to me, without taking the slightest notice of Fanny’s grief, or the illness fatigue had occasioned, he left the room. Terrified by his manner, Fanny uttered not a word till after he was gone, when she poured forth her tears and complaints to me, though I, alas! could do little to tranquillize her. She felt, however, pleased that the first meeting with Sir Townly was over, and gratified by his coming to see her, though he had merely threatened and insulted her. At this, though surprised, I was contented, for she is his wife, and cannot now recall the past. I sat with her till she became tolerably calm, and had the satisfaction of hearing her promise of never again interfering with Sir Townly ; but to reflect that my child is for life consigned to the power of such a man, after the indulgent tenderness to which she has ever been accustomed is too much ! Yet my mind is somewhat more at ease, as Fanny will, I hope, in future

be more prudent, and my apprehensions of Sir Townly's outrageous violence on meeting her reproaches is in a great degree lessened, for he has so overawed her that she will not, I am convinced, again offend him; but what a sad species of consolation does this afford!"

To this narration Sidney listened in silent wonder, for, though little surprised at Sir Townly's conduct, after his behaviour in the morning, Fanny's quiet acquiescence somewhat astonished her. That a woman who had behaved so ill to a most indulgent father, with such unprovoked jealousy and ill-nature to a kind brother, and such ingratitude to a fond mother, should yet submit with patience to this contemptuous treatment from a husband, seem pleased at a trifling concession accorded with so ill a grace, and followed by such insulting language, she could not have believed possible; and it sunk Lady Beauchamp still lower in her estimation; but she carefully suppressed her feelings, and merely declared her satisfaction that Mrs. Montague's apprehensions were even so far relieved.

CHAP. VIII.

MRS. MONTAGUE was soon restored to comparative tranquillity, by seeing her daughter and Sir Townly live on much better terms than they had done since their return to town. Fanny, terrified by the overpowering brutality of his menaces, no longer ventured to interfere, and seemed content to leave him uncontrolled master of his time and actions : Sir Townly, restored to good humour by being freed from her persecutions, and by the command of money he obtained, permitted her the same freedom which he enjoyed himself. He suffered her without remonstrance to indulge her love of splendour and magnificence, and was even content to receive, with something like satisfaction, the unremitting pains she took to render the house agreeable to him, whenever he was inclined to

spend a few hours at home. The turbulent, the capricious, the self-willed Fanny Montague, was now metamorphosed into the gentle and submissive Lady Beauchamp ; though all those, over whom she could tyrannize with impunity, paid dearly for her forbearance to her husband ; and she was by turns a slave and a tyrant in her own family.

Mrs. Montague, though internally disgusted by the conduct of both Sir Townly and her daughter, yet studiously encouraged her present behaviour to him, as that only which could have any chance of ensuring her peace ; but, though it relieved her apprehensions, it gave a shock to her affection for Fanny, which, not all her ingratitude and violence had been capable of producing; as to the meanness of her disposition she could now no longer remain insensible.

Mr. Montague, satisfied on seeing his lady restored to cheerfulness, never made an inquiry respecting Lady Beauchamp ; for, as her appearance in the world was fashionable, and adequate to what his daughter was entitled to command, he could feel no pity for her suffer-

ings from Sir Townly, nor regret that she was compelled to discipline her temper, which he had been so severely taught to lament she had not been early in life instructed to control.

The only circumstance which occurred during this period to give Sidney pleasure was Mrs. Enesy's arrival in town, who met and treated her with all her former kind partiality, but never even accidentally mentioned Major Sedley; a delicacy which much gratified Sidney, as she could not now endure to hear his name mentioned, not only from fear of betraying any indication of the emotion it never failed to produce, but as she could not avoid considering it degrading after his so publicly manifesting his intention to forget and resign her.

A few days after her arrival, Sir Townly and Lady Beauchamp with a large party were invited to dine at Merrion-square—an invitation Mrs. Enesy was obliged to decline, from the indisposition of one of her children.

At the usual hour Mr. Savage and all the other guests invited made their appearance, except Sir Townly and Lady Beauchamp. After waiting in momentary expectation of their

coming, or sending an apology, to a very late hour, Mrs. Montague despatched a servant to inquire what had detained them.

In a short time the man returned with Lady Beauchamp's compliments that Sir Townly had only just come home, and, as she had only waited for him, she would come immediately.

This message relieved Mrs. Montague's fears that something more disagreeable had occurred to detain her, and in about half an hour after she and Sir Townly made their appearance. Mrs. Montague, however displeased at Sir Townly's inattention, received him with her usual good breeding; but Mr. Montague and Charles, offended at his neglect of the respect and attention due to their family, and at his disdaining to make any apology, though now near eight o'clock, took no farther notice of him than returning his bow at his entrance, thinking it only incumbent on them to consult that propriety which Sir Townly so grossly violated. Sir Townly, no longer desirous to consult appearances, since it could no longer answer his own purposes, displayed, during the whole time of dinner, a careless

disregard of both, addressing his conversation to the other gentlemen present, without seeming to consider them as worthy of attention.

Shortly after the ladies retired to the drawing-room they were followed by Sir Townly, who, joining Lady Beauchamp, told her in a whisper that he was anxious to get away, and asked her if she would go to the play with him.

"It is very late," replied she mildly; "and, as we have taken no place, or formed no party, I should not like it."

"As you choose," returned he readily; "I can amuse myself very well without you."

He was then going away, when Fanny, extremely solicitous to oblige him, and flattered by the appearance of his wishing for her society, to which he was in general so indifferent, eagerly recalled him, saying she would go with pleasure: no place could be disagreeable if he was with her.

Sir Townly, without condescending to thank her for her compliance, or her anxiety for his company, simply told her he would immediately order his carriage, and left the room for that purpose.

However eager to oblige Sir Townly, Fanny was naturally disgusted at the idea of going into public without even the appearance of a party, or having any proper place secured ; but, unable now to obviate the one objection, she sought to remove the other by requesting Sidney and Anna would accompany her.

Anna, unwilling to leave the house, as a very large evening party was expected, declared she could not think of doing so, as her papa would be extremely displeased with her. Mrs. Montague, certain he would highly disapprove such a step, did not insist on her compliance ; but, wishing to gratify Lady Beauchamp, and averse to have her go alone to the theatre, as she could not trust Sir Townly's not leaving her to join any party that offered, yet not venturing to urge her to refuse obeying him, however offended by so strange a proposal, she entreated Sidney would accompany them, telling her that she placed such confidence in her prudence, she should feel happy to have her daughter under her care in so disagreeable a situation.

To comply with this request Sidney felt very averse : she dreaded her uncle's displeasure for so far sanctioning Sir Townly's neglect of the respect he owed him, and disliked to make one of Lady Beauchamp's private parties : but, unwilling to disappoint Mrs. Montague, and hoping that she would explain the matter to her uncle, she consented to accompany Lady Beauchamp ; and, escorted by Sir Townly, they set out together, leaving Anna much surprised at Sidney's acquiescing in a proposal which she had considered equally disagreeable and improper.

During their drive to the theatre, Sir Townly, uninfluenced by Sidney's presence, poured forth his indignation against Mr. Montague and his son in very unqualified terms, declaring he would not again visit at their house, though they should hear from him in a way they did not at present expect, and learn in future what it was to treat a man of his rank and consequence with so little ceremony.

In his anger Fanny very warmly partici-

pated, declaring that, since her papa did not treat him as he deserved, she would give up her own family entirely.

"I have no objection to your visiting your mother," cried Sir Townly, "who is a woman of sense and fashion; but, though I thought proper to pass over your father's airs when I wanted to marry you, I will teach him that Sir Townly Beauchamp is not to be insulted with impunity, and your insignificant brother shall learn that he had much better not have so openly proclaimed his determination of scorning my friendship;—as he will not like to be obliged to join his father in raising that part of your fortune which he thought proper to expend on building his house, to prevent an execution I would without hesitation issue."

Sidney, though little alarmed by threats which she thought it very improbable could seriously affect her uncle, as she could not suppose he would for a moment put himself in the power of such a man as Sir Townly, was yet offended at his using such language in her presence and she said, "Do you forget that

I am in your carriage, Sir Townly, that you speak in this manner of my uncle and his son?"

" You may tell them if you please," replied Sir Townly ; " it will be only forestalling my lawyer, who will wait on them to-morrow."

Sidney, though heartily regretting that any consideration had induced her to comply with Mrs. Montague's request, did not wish to enter into any farther altercation with a man whom no motive of politeness or propriety could one moment restrain from any conduct not decidedly prejudicial to his immediate interest or pleasure, made no reply. Sir Townly, satisfied with having expressed his indignation, threw himself back in the carriage, and remained silent ; while Lady Beauchamp continued to declare her perfect approbation of his feelings and determinations, plainly insinuating that she thought Sidney very impertinent for presuming to interfere on the subject. Sir Townly laughed at her vehemence, but vouchsafed her no farther notice.

On their arrival at the theatre, Sir Townly, without seeming to remember a syllable of

what had occurred during their drive, offered his arm to Sidney, who did not think it proper to decline accepting it, and conducted her and Lady Beauchamp to the stage-box, in which they found several gentlemen ; as they all knew Sir Townly, they made way and suffered him to place his two companions in the front row ; when Fanny, to shew her displeasure to Sidney, turned entirely from her, and engaged in conversation with the gentlemen to whose acquaintance Sir Townly had introduced her.

Mr. Hamilton, who was at the opposite side of the house, espying Sir Townly, strolled round to the box, and, after paying his compliments to him and Lady Beauchamp, turned to Sidney, and said carelessly, “ How do you do ? Gad, I thought you were dead, it is so long since I have seen you.”

“ My present appearance in the land of the living,” said Sidney, involuntarily diverted at this outré remark, “ is a very convincing proof you were mistaken.”

“ Ha ! so it is,” cried he, “ a very convincing proof, certainly.” . . .

Then, turning from her, he addressed one of the gentlemen standing near him. Sidney extremely pleased to be spared any farther conversation with a person as vulgar as profigate, turned her attention towards the stage, and Hamilton soon after left the box, accompanied by Sir Townly.

Sidney, getting a violent head-ache from the disagreeable glare of the stage lights, and extremely incommoded by the pressing forward of the gentlemen to see the ballet, felt so overcome by the heat, that she arose, and, with the assistance of a gentleman standing behind her, retired to one of the back benches. The gentleman after seeing her accommodated with a seat, returned to his place.

Scarcely had he left her, when, catching a glimpse of a well-known uniform in the next box, she looked eagerly forward, her heart throbbing violently from an apprehension it was Mr. French, whom, of all Major Sedley's brother officers, she most dreaded to encounter ; but every other sensation was absorbed in terror and astonishment on observing Sedley himself leaning against one of the pillars that

supported the box, his eyes fixed in steadfast gaze on her countenance, and while, every feature appeared agitated with almost phrensic wildness, so greatly changed, that even the most cursory glance sufficed to mark the alteration.

Scarcely had their eyes met, when Captain Elmore, starting forward from another part of the box, seized Sedley's arm, and endeavoured to force him away; while Sedley, though resisting his efforts, appeared unable either to speak, or withdraw his eyes from the object that had so irresistibly attracted his attention.

Sidney observed nothing farther. Already overpowered by the heat, and unable to repress the violent emotion that assailed her, not only on suddenly seeing Sedley, whom she believed in Spain, but on observing the striking alteration which had taken place in his appearance since their last meeting, she made a feeble effort to rise, without knowing what she wished or intended to do; and then sunk fainting on the bench.

On recovering her recollection, she found

herself in the waiting-room, supported by Major Sedley, who gazed at her with an expression of confused earnestness, while his whole frame shook with uncontrollable emotion.

Very imperfectly remembering where she was, or what had occurred, Sidney could only make some incoherent and alarming exclamations.

As Major Sedley's rapidity in springing into the box and carrying her out, had prevented any other person from offering their assistance, Captain Elmore alone had accompanied him, and, having gone to procure a glass of water, he now returned, and, sprinkling a part of it on Sidney's face, she again recovered her sensibility. With a look of earnest attention, she fixed her eyes on Captain Elmore, as if to ascertain the reality of the scene before her, when Major Sedley, unable longer to conceal emotions he could make no effort to subdue, wildly exclaimed, "Oh Miss Montague, once my adored, my promised Sidney, why is it I meet you thus? What new deception, what cruel artifice, has

again been practised?—Your present appearance, your present manner, does not, oh surely it does not, accord with the cold, the cruel, the unfeeling, repulse you gave me. Who could have so basely, so cruelly, injured me? I never deceived you; I faithfully, frankly, told you all; why then did you doom me to the anguish I have suffered, if indeed your heart is unchanged,—if I am not again the dupe of my own bewildered imagination?"

Unable to doubt the reality of the scene before her, or to understand the meaning of the speech Sedley had just uttered, Sidney trembled with agitation and astonishment, and was for many moments unable to reply; while Major Sedley regarded her with a mingled expression of doubt and tenderness; and Captain Elmore, with a countenance on which anger and emotion were visibly depicted, stood silent and inactive. At length, making a violent effort to control her feelings, in a voice scarcely audible she replied, "Why, Major Sedley, do you address such language to me? Why, after all that has passed; do you

question the propriety of my conduct, which your own has so well justified?"

"How? in what instance?" cried he, with an almost convulsive change of countenance. I told you my situation; why then did you deceive me? why smile approbation at the moment, and then so coldly, so cruelly, destroy every hope you had led me to form?"

"Your reproaches are as cruel, as you know them to be unjust," cried Sidney, with an energy inspired by resentment: "did you, could you, believe me insensible to the insults I received?"

"Insults!" repeated he: "by whom insulted? Explain your meaning, unless indeed you wish to drive me to distraction."

"How, Miss Montague," exclaimed Captain Elmore, in a tone of deep resentment, "can you so cruelly trifle with the feelings of a man, whose present agitation must convince you how fatally to his own peace he has loved you? Why not with the candour I once believed that you possessed, explain your meaning, and account for conduct which I did not think you, or any member of your family, could have practised."

. Sidney, in some degree recovered from her agitation by astonishment at Captain Elmore's words and manner, exclaimed, "Whatever are your feelings with respect to me, Captain Elmore, you ought not to join in such an accusation, after the letter old Mr. Sedley wrote to my uncle."

"My father write to Mr. Montague!" cried Sedley, starting: "When? How could my father write to him? and for what purpose?"

On hearing these words, Sidney looked from one to the other with earnest and terrified wonder; when, observing the almost phrensic expression of Major Sedley's countenance, she said, "Oh, Captain Elmore, explain the meaning of all this; can it be possible Major Sedley is still ignorant of the letter his father wrote to my uncle? Am I," continued she, putting her hand across her eyes, dreaming? "or is Major Sedley delirious?"

"Tell me," cried Captain Elmore, eagerly, while Sedley hung over her in breathless silence, "the purport of the letter you mention, or when it was received; for I swear to you on my honour, as a gentleman, that neither

Sedley nor myself ever till this moment heard of it."

"Impossible!" cried Sidney, looking aghast with astonishment; "it is not, it cannot be, possible."

"Can you doubt my honour," cried Elmore, vehemently? "You cannot believe I would solemnly pledge it in a falsehood. I beseech you do not hesitate to give me the information I request?"

"I know not," said she, sighing deeply, "what to think, what to believe; but the letter I mention was received by my uncle on the day he wrote his to Major Sedley; and the purport was to reject all connexion with his family, couched in terms of, the cruellest insult."

"Great Heavens! is this possible?" exclaimed Sedley: "can this be true?

Sidney, nearly overpowered with a confused sensation of horror and anguish at the conviction that now forced itself on her mind that Sedley had remained in ignorance of this letter till the present moment, and that this ignorance had alone produced conduct so

wounding to her pride and feelings, said in a faltering voice, “ It is true, too true; but, in pity to me, command your feelings.”

“ And is my peace still dear to you ?” cried Sedley; “ and have you not, as I believed, intentionally resigned me, a prey to anguish and despair ?”

“ Otwage,” exclaimed Captain Elmore, alarmed at hearing an approaching step, “ command your feelings, exert your fortitude, act worthy of yourself, and all will yet be well. I now see the meaning of what has passed; Ellinor has planned it all.”

“ Ellinor !” repeated Sedley, starting violently: “ how could she know? what could she do ?”

At that moment Sir Townly Beauchamp advanced. Seeing Sidney pale and agitated, supported in the arms of a stranger, he exclaimed, “ What is the matter, Miss Montague? has the extraordinary heat of the house over-powered you ? What shall I get for you ?”

“ If you would have the goodness to get her a glass of wine, sir,” said Captain Elmore, “ perhaps it might revive her.”

Sir Townly looked at Captain Elmore with an expression that fully indicated he thought him very impertinent for presuming to send him of a message; but, perceiving his observation returned by a glance which he did not perfectly approve, and feeling himself called on to take some trouble for a lady, confessedly under his protection, he prevailed on himself to saunter forward for that purpose, when Captain Elmore, taking advantage of his absence, exclaimed, “Otwage, command yourself; remember you will be observed.”

The sight of Sir Townly had acted like an electric stroke on Sedley; so long accustomed to the effort of disguising his feelings from the observation of every person except Elmore, that in a few moments he was restored to self-possession; when, tenderly pressing Sidney’s hand, he exclaimed, “Forgive the reproaches, the injustice,—the ravings which a sight of you so changed, produced. What misery have I not endured since our last meeting! Some fraud, some villany I cannot at present understand, has been practised; but every

exertion will I now make to detect and punish the authors of such cruelty."

" Your doing so," said Sidney mournfully, " will not now avail. Oh," continued she, shuddering at a recollection of all the indignation her uncle and Charles had expressed against him and his family, " you know not what it will produce,—horror and misery of every kind!"

" Every thing will I brave," cried he in a tone of desperation ; " every thing but the loss of you : the dear, the unchanged angel I could not believe you, I have again found you, and never will I now but with life resign you."

Sir Townly approached, followed by a waiter with a glass of wine, which Sedley taking, presented to Sidney, entreating her to drink it in a tone which Sir Townly's presence had again forced into calmness.

" I had better order my carriage, Miss Montague," cried Sir Townly ; " you don't seem well enough to return to the box."

" You would much oblige me by doing so, sir," replied Sidney, " as I am extrcinely anxious to return home."

Sir Townly again leaving them for this pur-

pose, Sedley vehemently exclaimed, “ Who are you with ? or why do I see you under the protection of such a man as Sir Townly Beauchamp ? ”

“ Do you not know,” cried Sidney, “ that Fanny Montague is Lady Beauchamp, and that she is now in the box I quitted ? ”

“ No,” cried he more calmly, “ I did not see her, and was ignorant of her marriage.”

Sidney, calling all her fortitude to her aid, exclaimed, “ I must now leave you, Major Sedley, and after this evening we meet no more. I am glad,” continued she in a faltering voice, “ to convince you how much you have injured me by your suspicions ; but do not take advantage of the weakness I have betrayed, to plunge me into sorrow beyond any I have yet experienced, could my uncle, or Charles, know what has passed.”

“ On me you may implicitly rely, Miss Montague,” cried Elmore, eagerly, “ for preventing the mischief you apprehend. I have injured you —I have been again deceived by appearances —but I will now repair my error, by every effort to detect perfidy, which I feel burning to punish.

When Otwage has had time for reflexion, he will be more master of himself ; and rest assured that a member of your family he shall not meet till we have fully discovered what is at present so mysterious. But I cannot even hint to you what are my suspicions."

" Whatever deceit may have been practised," said Sidney sighing, " it is now of no consequence. Mr. Sedley's letters my uncle never will pardon : the insults were indeed too gross to be forgotten."

" Mr. Sedley no more wrote that letter than I did," replied Elmore vehemently : " he is a man of honour, a gentleman perfectly incapable of such conduct, and Sedley's ignorance and mine on the subject must convince you I speak the truth."

" I feel very ill," said Sidney, putting her hand to her forehead, amazed by this new assertion : " I wish indeed I was at home."

" Forbear, Henry," cried Sedley, in a low voice, " forbear till we are alone ; Miss Montague is quite overcome, and I myself feel strangely bewildered."

Elmore made no reply, and Sedley, with tender earnestness, endeavoured to reanimate Sidney's fainting spirits. She at length said, "I thought you and Mr. Elmore were in Spain : how is it I have in every instance been so strangely deceived ?"

"I did purpose to go," cried he ; "but circumstances I have not now time to mention retarded my departure."

"And do you still intend to go ?" said she in a tremulous voice.

"Oh no," cried he, with breathless eagerness, "my exchange I could not complete ; my honour is not therefore at stake, and nothing else could now induce me to take such a step."

Sir Townly, returning, told Sidney his carriage was at the door ; adding, as you appear so ill, Miss Montague, I had better apprise Lady Beauchamp of your indisposition, and she will return with you."

"No, no, I am much obliged to you," said Sidney, whose strength was restored by terror at a proposal that would infallibly betray her meeting with Sedley, "I am sufficiently re-

covered to return alone, and Lady Beauchamp might not, perhaps, wish to leave her party."

"As you choose," said Sir Townly, carelessly; "you are the best judge."

Sidney rising, he offered her his arm, at the same time bowing haughtily to the two gentlemen, by way of returning thanks for their assistance, which, ignorant who they were, he disdained in any other way to notice.

On seeing Sidney about to lean on Sir Townly, Sedley, by an irresistible impulse, was eagerly advancing to take her under his own protection, offended by the whole of Sir Townly's behaviour; but Captain Elmore, seizing his arm, held him back; and bowing to Sidney, as if a total stranger, wished her good night, adding, "Now, Madam, under the protection of your own friends, our services are no longer required."

Sidney bowed in turn, but made no effort to reply. Sir Townly, attributing her silence and trembling to indisposition, again offered to fetch Lady Beauchamp to take care of her. This offer she declined, and, with a resolution, which the renewed dread it inspired enabled

her to exert, proceeded on without looking back.

On reaching the carriage, Sir Townly, assisting her in, ordered the coachman to drive to Mr. Montague's, and then returned into the theatre. The man, not perfectly comprehending his master, sent the footman to the carriage-door to receive fresh orders from Sidney. On leaning forward for that purpose, she perceived Captain Elmore wrapped up in a regimental great coat, that concealed the lower part of his face, and standing behind the footman. When the latter advanced to give the coachman the message he had received, Elmore approached the window, and said, in a low voice, "We shall not lose sight of the carriage till we see you home: for my poor friend's sake, tranquillize your spirits, and conceal what has happened till we can with propriety apply to Mr. Montague, and depend on me for all the prudence I can exert to avert every evil that terrifies you. Again, good night! God bless you, and rest assured we shall ere long meet in happier circumstances."

"Good night," returned Sidney mournfully;

"on you I feel I may depend, and it affords me the only consolation I can receive."

Captain Elmore made no reply but by calling to the coachman to drive slowly, as Miss Montague was much indisposed; and he then disappeared among the crowd in the street.

Sidney, left alone, endeavoured not to think of, or account for what had occurred: all she sought was to tranquillize her spirits so far as to answer rationally to the questions which she knew would be asked on her return, and in this she succeeded.

On reaching her uncle's, and stepping out of the carriage, she perceived two gentlemen muffled up, whom she recognised to be Sedley and Elmore; they stood near the carriage till they saw her enter the house, and then walked down the square. Revived by the conviction that they could not be known by any of Sir Townly's servants, she desired the footman who had opened the door to tell her aunt she had been obliged by illness to leave the playhouse before the play was concluded, and hastily went to her room.

Here she was in a short time followed by Mrs. Montague, who came to express her concern at her indisposition, and her surprise that Lady Beauchamp had suffered her to return alone. Sidney, briefly saying that the heat had overpowered her, added, Lady Beauchamp had been ignorant of her fainting, as she would not permit Sir Townly to apprise her of it.

"Sir Townly was in the house then," said Mrs. Montague, "when you left it."

"He was, ma'am, and desired the carriage to return for him immediately."

"Can you tell me does he or Fanny intend to return here to supper?"

"I cannot, indeed."

"I hope they may not, or at least that he may not," said Mrs. Montague, sighing, "for your uncle is so displeased at his conduct during the day, and at his leaving the house in the manner he did, that I dread their meeting. He was not pleased at your going with Fanny till I told him you did it merely to oblige me; and do not, my dear Sidney, say that Fanny allowed you to return alone, as it will only needlessly incense him."

Sidney replied she would not, and Mrs. Montague left her to her repose.

All that had occurred passed in confused succession before her, and it was long before she could distinctly arrange or remember the various and surprising incidents which this evening had unfolded. How Major Sedley could have remained ignorant of his father's letter,—or how that letter could be, as Captain Elmore had asserted, a forgery,—no surmises she could form could rationally account for. At length taking out old Mr. Sedley's letter, which she had put up with the one she had received from Major Sedley, she examined them, and, with a sensation of horror, perceived that the arms engraved on the seal of both were precisely the same. For a moment she yielded to the suspicion that Sedley and Elmore had mutually deceived her; but a little farther reflection calmed her agitation; for what purpose could they have uttered such a falsehood? Had such been their intention, why wait for an accidental meeting? Why so long give up any attempt to see or converse with her? And Elmore's evident anxiety to force Sedley

away the moment he had perceived her, was a proof that he could not have designed to impose on her. He had pledged his honour, too, that they had been equally ignorant of the letter, and all Sedley's conduct justified the assertion. Again she recalled every word, every look, every action, of Sedley's ; his altered appearance,—the wildness, the emotion, he had betrayed ; and her heart bled at the recollection of how unjustly, perhaps, she had accused him, and sought to drive him from her remembrance. The more she reflected, the more she became bewildered, till at length the words Captain Elmore had used, "I now see the meaning of what has passed, Ellinor has planned it all," and which in the first hurry of her spirits she had forgotten, returned to her recollection, and anew plunged her in doubt and suspicion. Who could this Ellinor be ?—how could she have any influence on Sedley's fate ?—what interest could she have in endeavouring to prevent his marriage ?—The only idea that occurred was, that she must be some person whom Sedley had formerly deserted ; and, urged by resentment, or perhaps

by affection, had fallen on this artifice, to prevent the final loss of the man who had won but to abandon her. This would easily solve Sedley's ignorance of the letter ; and why his father had not informed him of what he could not himself have suspected.

This solution of the perplexing mystery was infinitely more torturing than all her suspicions and surmises. It would indeed explain every thing, but in a way which robbed Sedley of every pretension to that superior excellence she had so long fondly flattered herself he possessed ; nor could his passion for her, plead any apology in her pure and upright mind for baseness and perfidy to another. Lamenting that she had again met Sedley, dreading the consequences that might ensue should he apply to her uncle, and no longer trusting to his faith or honour, she was exhausted by the conflict, and spent so wretched and sleepless a night, that she was next morning unable to rise from her bed.

CHAP. IX.

ON hearing of her indisposition, Mrs. Montague and Anna came to her room together. Unable to make any effort at conversation, she feigned a desire to sleep, and they left her to repose, giving strict orders that she should not be disturbed.

Sleep Sidney vainly endeavored to procure : each moment that she tried to shut her eyes, and shut out alike thought and light, the past swam in indistinct visions before her, and she at length gave up an attempt that merely increased her feverish anxiety, though she felt a sort of comparative ease that Mrs. Montague's strict prohibition had preserved her from intrusion.

Thus passed the hours till about two o'clock, when, after a loud knocking at the door, she heard a step approaching her chamber, and her heart almost ceased to beat, from

an apprehension that the visitor thus loudly announced was either Sedley or Elmore ; nor did the improbabiltiy of such a conjecture offer any alleviation of her fears, till one of the maid-servants, softly unclosing the door, informed her that Mrs. Enesy was in the drawing-room, and, on hearing she was ill, had sent an earnest request to see her ; adding, that her mistress and Miss Montague had gone out in the carriage.

" Tell Mrs. Enesy I shall be happy to see her," said Sidney, again breathing freely, " if she will have the goodness to come up stairs."

The maid, saying that such had been Mrs. Enesy's intention, left the room. Sidney, though sorry at being compelled to see any person in her present state of mind, yet unable to reject Mrs. Enesy's offered kindness, tried to compose her thoughts, and, if possible, conceal her agitation.

In a few moments Mrs. Enesy came into the room. Sidney, thanking her for her kind attention in coming to see her, hastily accounted for her indisposition, by saying that she had

been taken ill at the theatre on the preceding evening.

“ I know you were,” replied Mrs. Enesy, taking her hand ; “ I know all that passed at the playhouse yesterday evening. Do not be alarmed, my dearest Sidney,” continued she, observing her change colour, “ Major Sedley has confided in me from motives of the purest tenderness to you, and surely you cannot distrust either my honour or my prudence.”

New and powerful emotions overpowered Sidney. Could Sedley, if conscious of guilt, apply to Mrs. Enesy ? A hope that such a step might lead to his exculpation, arose in her mind, and she at length said, “ Pardon my weakness, Mrs. Enesy ; I am very sensible of your kindness ; but my thoughts are so strangely distracted, I know not what to say, what opinion to form.” .

“ To express how sincerely I have sympathized in your feelings, and lamented the sufferings you have experienced, my dear young friend,” cried Mrs. Enesy tenderly, “ would not now be kindness, but cruelty : I will therefore hasten to relieve your mind by declaring the

purport of my visit ; and let the motives plead my apology for conduct that to you may appear indelicate, and that your friends might consider as officious ; but, convinced that Major Sedley has been the victim of deceit and malice, I have, at his earnest request, consented to assist him to discover the author, and to counteract the ill effects of the treachery that must have been practised. Do you wish me to undertake such an office ? Have I your permission to mention the purpose for which I solicited this interview ?”

Astonished by a speech that seemed to involve the object of her perplexity in tenfold obscurity, yet pleased to have the whole management of the affair intrusted to Mrs. Enesy, on whose prudence she had the utmost reliance, Sidney called all her resolution to her aid, to hear it finally explained ; and, after a few moments' deliberation, said, “I fear I have appeared strangely wanting in gratitude for the kindness that has prompted your generous intercession, and saved me from misery, which might have ended only with my life ; but the torturing distress of my mind will, I trust,

plead my excuse: with unaffected pleasure, will I commit the whole management of this intricate affair into your hands; but I entreat that you will first have the goodness to inform me of all that passed between you and Major Sedley on the subject."

"I must be brief," replied Mrs. Enesy, "as Major Sedley is now waiting at my lodgings for my return. He proposes to set out for General Sedley's in the morning; you will therefore pardon an abruptness which my anxious desire to calm the minds of both has occasioned. He spent the whole morning with me, told me all that has passed between you, and informed me of the letter Mr. Montague received, which neither he nor Captain Elmore, who was also with him, believe his father ever wrote. Under this conviction, he begs you will mention to me as far as you can recollect the substance of it, which I will," continued she, taking a pencil and slip of paper from her pocket-book, "commit to writing, to convince his father how basely his name has been used by one who has too long imposed on his understanding, and abused his confidence."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Sidney, "what can all this mean?"

Then, drawing Mr. Sedley's letter from her pocket, she put it into Mrs. Enesy's hand, saying, "Here is the letter: it will explain itself; to you I confide it."

"May I read it?" said Mrs. Enesy, changing colour as she cast her eyes over the direction.

"You will oblige me by doing so," said Sidney, much agitated on observing Mrs. Enesy's change of countenance.

Mrs. Enesy hastily cast her eye over the letter, when, with great emotion, she exclaimed, "The Major and Captain Elmore have been alike deceived; this is indisputably Mr. Sedley's writing. How greatly am I shocked at reading such a letter addressed to your uncle, by a man I have sincerely loved and respected, I cannot say; but I will shew it to Major Sedley, and then return it to you."

"Can Major Sedley and Captain Elmore have deceived me?" exclaimed Sidney: "they both solemnly asserted that they believed it a forgery."

"To me," replied Mrs. Enesy, "they have made the same assertion. From their infancy I have known them both, as an aunt of mine was married to General Sedley, the Major's uncle, and I assure you most solemnly I believe them to be young men possessing the strictest principles of integrity : had I not been convinced of that, I never would have undertaken such an embassy."

The entrance of Mrs. Montague put an end to their conversation, and Mrs. Enesy soon rose to take leave, telling Sidney with an expressive smile that she would come to see her next day.

As soon as she was gone, Mrs. Montague, without observing Sidney's agitation, or alluding to her illness, said, "I have to mention, Sidney, what will grieve and surprise you, and what has shocked me more than any other occurrence of my life."

"What can possibly have happened?" exclaimed Sidney; "for what new misfortune am I now to prepare?"

"I ought not to agitate you at present," cried Mrs. Montague, "but I can not com-

mand my feelings ; nor will you wonder they should overpower me, when I tell you that an agent of Sir Townly's waited on your uncle this morning, to inform him that his client had immediate occasion for 5000*l.* of Fanny's fortune, which she lent him on her coming of age, and he begged it should be paid without any farther delay : nor was this all, for on my calling to see Fanny, and expressing my regret at the circumstance, lest it might still farther alienate her father's mind from her, she declared—yes,” continued she, clasping her hands, “she declared she was very indifferent on the subject, for that, since her papa behaved so ill to Sir Townly, she had no desire to continue her visits at his house.” .

This information recalling to Sidney Sir Townly's conversation of the preceding evening, she related what had passed, expressing a hope that his conduct could not in any other way affect her uncle than by the displeasure it must give him.

“ I hope and believe not,” said Mrs. Montague, sighing, “ as the moment my dear Charles heard of the demand, with all that prompt and

tender affection he has ever shewn us, he offered to join his father in giving any security which might be required to raise the money and free him from Sir Townley's demand, without compelling him to a forced sale of some of the woods of Belle Vue, which he has the power to cut down. They both left the house immediately after breakfast for this purpose. Heavy and unnecessary expense, I know, must ensue from their being obliged to raise the money so hastily ; but that is not what oppresses me,—it is the ingratitude of a child I so tenderly loved, the base return she has made for all mine and her poor father's care and affection ;—but I will endeavour, if possible, to drive her from my heart and remembrance, and no longer grieve and harass my beloved Charles, who has never, in the course of his life, given me or his father one hour's uneasiness."

" He is, indeed," cried Sidney, " the best, the most affectionate of sons, the kindest-hearted of human beings ; and do, I entreat, my dear aunt, try to find consolation in his society and affection for the cruel disappointment you

have suffered in one, who, I am unwillingly compelled to confess, does not deserve the tenderness you have felt for her."

"I will," said Mrs. Montague in great agitation, make the struggle; but oh, Sidney, how sincerely do I reproach myself for the foolish affection I have bestowed on Fanny, and which perhaps materially helped to injure a disposition I fear nature did not make too amiable, though I, alas! was blind to its imperfections. How incessantly do I lament my undue partiality, when from Anna, whom I never loved with the same tenderness, I receive that duty and affection in which her sister has so wholly failed. To her I will now, as far as I can, atone for any unkindness that may have wounded her feelings; but never can I forgive myself, or cease to lament my conduct."

Grieved at seeing her aunt thus severely condemn almost the only fault that she had, with respect to her children, committed, Sidney earnestly sought to console her. Mrs. Montague, having given relief to the first agony of her feelings became more calm, and, after prevailing on Sidney to take some refreshment, left

her, entreating she would try to compose herself to sleep, and that she would give positive orders she should not again be disturbed.

Thus left to herself, Sidney's thoughts again recurred to Sedley, and to all Mrs. Enesy had said : soothed by the assurance she had given her, and perfectly relying on her honour, she endeavoured to quell the restless anxiety she felt for the final elucidation of what appeared so extraordinary; but as the mystery attached entirely to Mr. Sedley, as his conduct alone had been cruel and unjust, the transporting conviction of Sedley's tenderness and truth, that no disgrace or dishonour attached to him, no barrier raised by himself opposed their union, proved a recompense for all the anguish she had endured ; and she tried to banish the fears, the hopes, the doubts, and astonishment, which alternately oppressed her. At length exhausted, she dropped asleep, and awaking, about seven o'clock, found herself so much refreshed that she rose, and, on learning that her aunt was in the drawing-room, proceeded thither, conscious how much her mind must be occupied by the present situation

of her affairs, on finding her alone with Anna, she anxiously inquired if any thing had occurred since morning to alleviate the uneasiness she had then suffered.

" Alas ! no," replied Mrs. Montague, " except the certainty that your uncle will be enabled in the course of a few days to raise the money, and free himself from the power of a man who has had the insolence to declare it was his inability or unwillingness to refund this part of his daughter's fortune that alone induced him to refuse his consent to her marriage. Unhappy girl, what a fate has her perverse disobedience incurred ! and how bitterly will she yet lament her conduct, as not even the trifling alleviation, which my tenderness and consolation could afford, can she now receive, as you all three have made it their joint request that I will not expose myself to Sir Townly's insolence by going to see her ! To this request I could not think myself justified in refusing compliance ; I could not make so ungrateful a return to the tenderness, the uniform attention, your uncle has shewn me, as either to feel or appear insensible to the

ill treatment he has received, nor so ill reward my dear Charles's attentive kindness, and prompt exertion to save his father from any species of uneasiness, as to visit at the house of a man so confessedly and deservedly odious to him."

" And surely, mamma," cried Anna, eagerly, " you cannot wish to see Fanny, after her improper and disrespectful treatment to you to-day, and the manner in which she spoke of my papa and Charles. Some excuse might be offered for her violence while under the influence of passion ; but, after such deliberate ingratitude she should be left entirely to Sir Townly Beau-champ, since his manners are so pleasing to her."

" I feel, I acknowledge, all her ill conduct," said Mrs. Montague, sighing deeply, " nor can I wonder at or blame your resentment; but, my dear Anna, when you are yourself a mother, you will then be more sensible how impossible it is so easily to forget a mother's feelings."

The entrance of a servant with a note to Anna prevented the necessity of a reply, which she felt averse to make, as the only one that

occurred would have more strongly censured her sister. After reading the note she put it into Sidney's hand, saying, that, as it entirely concerned her, she was the most proper person to answer it.

Sidney hastily cast her eye over the note ; she found it came from Mrs. Enesy, containing the most affectionate inquiries after her health, and entreating that Anna would mention particularly how she was that evening.

That Major Sedley's anxiety had prompted this inquiry, Sidney could not doubt, as Mrs. Enesy had promised to visit her next day, and was already aware of the cause of her illness. She wrote the following answer :—

“ For MRS. ENESY,

“ I cannot express the gratitude I feel for your kind attention, my dear Mrs. Enesy. I am perfectly recovered by a few hours' sleep from the indisposition that so heavily oppressed me in the morning : pray suffer me to apologize for the strange and apparently ungrateful manner in which I received such strong proofs of the interest you feel in my happiness ; but trust me

when I assure you that no time can erase from my mind the impression your kindness has made there.

“ I shall no longer detain your messenger than to say I shall feel extreme pleasure in taking a drive with you to-morrow, if no other engagement occupies your time.

“ Your grateful and affectionate

“ SIDNEY-ANNE MONTAGUE.”

*Merrion-Square,
Thursday Evening.*

Mr. Montague and Charles, coming into the room, with kind and gratifying warmth expressed their pleasure at seeing Sidney so much recovered from the ill effects of going in such weather to a crowded theatre; but, occupied by the indignation they mutually felt against Sir Townly, they thought not of expostulating with her on the impropriety of having joined his party. Sidney secretly rejoiced at her acquiescence in a proposal, which, however disagreeable at the moment, had, without being followed by un-

pleasant consequences, at length brought her and Sedley to a mutual explanation of a circumstance, which, but for this accidental meeting, might for ever have remained in obscurity; as each, thinking themselves ill treated, had felt no wish so ardent as to drive the other from their heart.

Mr. Montague, having previously obtained Mrs. Montague's consent, distinctly announced his wish that all farther intimacy should cease between his family and Sir Townly Beau-champ's. He then changed the subject, and made no farther allusion to it during the remainder of the evening.

When Sidney was enabled to take a calm review of the past, the hope that Sedley was exonerated from any share of blame, except what she had originally imputed to him, of an intention of eluding his father's authority,—the conviction that she still retained all her former influence over his heart, and might, without any feeling of wounded pride or degrading folly, still cherish her own tenderness,—soothed and delighted her. With tears of sorrow and affection, she reflected on all he must have

suffered, while ignorant of any reason to assign for either her letter or her uncles ; she wondered excessively why he had not sought any explanation, or how, under such circumstances, he could have preserved his affection for her ; and considered his having done so as the strongest proof she had yet received of his tenderness. With pleasure she reflected on her own conduct with respect to Mr. Savage, which now left her at liberty to act without the shadow of an imputation on either her honour or delicacy, since, unseduced by any temptation of interest, any feeling of anger, she had steadily avowed her sentiments, and might therefore persist in rejecting his addresses, should he be disposed to renew them, without assigning any farther reason for such a determination either to him or to Charles. The latter she resolved to keep in ignorance of her meeting with Sedley, dreading his severe displeasure; and fearing, that to revenge what he might consider a second insult to his family, he would seek Sedley for that purpose, she resolved that no tenderness, no inducement, should tempt her to

any farther intercourse with Sedley, unauthorized by her friends ; though she could not regret a meeting that had relieved both from the unjust suspicions they had felt, however little happiness might result from the interview. For, that Sedley could induce his father to retract his letter, or, if he did, that Mr. Montague would accept of any apology, she could not hope, from her knowledge of his unconquerable pride, which made him resent, as the deepest injury any insult offered to his family ; and such an one as he had received, she with pain acknowledged, it was not reasonable to hope he could forgive, however her affection to Sedley might induce her to pass over his father's conduct.

CHAP. X.

As Sidney had informed Mrs. Montague of her engagement with Mrs. Enesy, she was left at home to fulfil it, and was sitting in the drawing-room, awaiting her arrival with impatience, when the door was opened by a servant, who ushered in Mr. Savage.

Though vexed at the intrusion, she received him with her usual politeness. Mr. Savage, thrown off his guard by having heard from Charles of her recent illness, and by now finding her alone, so tenderly declared his pleasure at seeing her so much recovered, mixed with so many undisguised expressions of his attachment, that Sidney felt herself called on to convince him of the error he was committing in indulging feelings she had hoped he endeavoured to subdue; and she therefore steadily, and plainly, though mildly, advised him no longer to waste his time and

attention on one, who never could reward his attachment. Mr. Savage, disappointed and offended at observing how little progress he had made towards the accomplishment of his wishes, abruptly took his leave. Sidney, though unaffectedly sorry at being thus compelled to give him pain, was yet better pleased at having excited anger than sorrow, earnestly hoping that pride and resentment would soon drive her from his heart. She felt surprised that a man of his character could pursue a woman who was insensible of his merit, being ignorant of the various motives by which he was actuated, and the strange caprices into which personal pride will hurry those, who yield themselves to its guidance.

Mr. Savage had been scarcely gone when Mrs. Enesy drove to the door, and with a beating heart she hurried to the carriage.

"How happy I feel, my dear Sidney," said Mrs. Enesy, with a smile, "to see you so perfectly recovered! What sincere pleasure did your affectionate note of last night give to *all* your friends!"

Then, desiring her coachman to drive to

the park, she conversed on indifferent subjects till they reached it, when she put Mr. Sedley's letter into Sidney's hand, saying, "The emotions which a perusal of that letter gave to Major Sedley were such as gave me very sincere pain to witness. I will not dwell longer on the subject, but, with your permission, hasten to relieve the anxiety you must have felt, from the very singular circumstance of his having so long remained in ignorance of a letter, with the contents of which, or at least of such an one having been written, it was but natural to suppose he must have been acquainted."

"Such a recital would inexpressibly oblige me," said Sidney, "as I must confess myself at a loss to account for it."

"To enable you to do this with clearness," replied Mrs. Ensy, drawing a packet from her *ridicule*, "Major Sedley has entreated me to deliver this for your perusal, as it will give you a much better idea of his situation, a much more perfect explanation of the motives that have influenced his conduct, than I could possibly detail; and to do this I could not refuse, as I

am but too well convinced of the injuries he has suffered, and have the most perfect reliance on his honour. This is all he hopes or expects from me; for this morning he set out with Captain Elmore for General Sedley's, and pledged his honour to me, never, except through him, to apply to you or your friends. On his assistance he relies for the full accomplishment of his wishes; and he has requested I would, in his name, entreat you to banish every apprehension from your mind, as Mr. Montague or Charles he never will meet, except on terms of friendship. Do not therefore harass yourself with unnecessary terrors, but read, and candidly tell me your opinion of what Major Sedley has written."

• Sidney broke the seal in silence, and, unfolding several sheets of paper, closely written, read the following narrative :—

• “ FOR MISS S. MONTAGUE.

“ Agitated by a variety of contending emotions, how shall I arrange my thoughts? how calm the tumult of my mind, to enter into a recital as strange as it is improper to

meet your eye? Yet, fatally convinced of the necessity that demands a frank relation of every circumstance which can tend to clear my honour from the stigma Mr. Montague has cast on it,—and soothed by the assurance conveyed in your note, which Mrs. Enesy was so kind as to shew me, that you are recovered from an indisposition which I feared my own rashness had but too much increased,—I will make the painful effort, and mention without disguise every circumstance of my life, every motive that has influenced my conduct, or that can have influenced my father's; though the blush of shame must ever tinge my cheek at the recollection that he has compelled me to such a measure.

“ Clearly to elucidate all past transactions, and explain all my own conduct, which has unfortunately exposed me to the suspicion of baseness I should disdain to practise, I must mention circumstances that occurred previous to my birth; as, without some relation of the affairs of my family and a general sketch of their characters, my behaviour must wear the appearance of duplicity or folly.

" My grandfather Sedley had two sons ; and, having early selected my father as his favourite, he obliged all his other children to yield implicit submission to his desires. My uncle Sedley violently resented his father's unjust partiality ; and, had not my grandmother's prudence counteracted its ill effects, the deadliest feuds would have been engendered between two brothers, from nature and character attached to each other. By an exertion of sense and foresight, of which few would have been capable, instead of still farther increasing the evil by the mistaken kindness of bestowing all her indulgence and affection on her younger son, and thus encouraging him in disobedience to a father whom he ought to respect, and invidious rivalry with a brother he loved, she took a very opposite course. She worked on the natural generosity of my father's disposition ; with assiduous care implanted in his infant mind the strongest conviction of the tenderness he owed to a brother, placed by nature, and still more by a father's injustice, in a subordinate situation ; and thus excited a most anxious desire to

atone to my uncle, by redoubled kindness and affection on his part, for all the undeserved mortifications he endured. Such were the happy effects of her well-judged care and impartial tenderness to both, that they grew up with sentiments of fraternal affection for each other, such as I fear there are not many examples of in the world.

" Some time after my uncle had entered the army, he requested his father's consent to his union with a young lady, who resided in the neighbourhood of the Park, an aunt to Mrs. Enesy, and to whom he had from childhood been attached ; but, as her fortune was not such as my grandfather approved, he refused his consent, declaring that, if my uncle did not renounce all idea of such a connexion, he would not only withdraw his allowance, but cut him off from any share of that property he had the power of disposing of at pleasure among his younger children. In vain my grandmother argued and entreated. My father equally in vain remonstrated and even offered to join my grandfather to encumber the estate with a sum of money adequate to the

fortune of any of my aunts, to obviate his chief objection to the union. My grandfather replied, that he would not for any of his children injure him, far less for an undutiful and headstrong son.

“ Thus ended my uncle’s hopes, when, in a fit of sullen desperation, he threw off all farther claim to the care or affection of a parent, to whom he had with difficulty thus long yielded obedience ; and, exchanging his commission with another officer, embarked for India, without apprizing any of his family of his intentions.—On his arrival he wrote to my grandmother, entreating her pardon for his rashness ; and to my father, to communicate his motives and intentions, which were, he said, to use every exertion in his power to acquire a sufficient fortune to enable him to support the chosen object of his affections.

“ At the period of the arrival of these letters, the offer of a splendid connexion for one of his daughters induced my grandfather to wish to raise a sum of money which he required for that purpose ; and he proposed to my father to assist him, by putting

the estate in his own power, assuring him he should not be injured. Of this my father was well convinced, but refused to acquiesce in the proposal, unless my grandfather would consent to give him a certain sum of money for himself, for the destination of which he declined to account.

" Anxious to carry his own wishes into effect, and believing that my father had contracted a gambling debt, in which error he suffered him to remain, my grandfather yielded to his terms, and my father transmitted the money to India, to enable my uncle to pursue his intentions with success. He also used such active exertions among his friends at home, that my uncle was rapidly raised to rank and fortune, and enabled to obtain the object for whom he had sacrificed so much, and whom my father prevailed on to go out to India under proper protection.

" Some months previous to this event, my grandfather died ; and my father with astonishment then discovered, that, to gratify his resentment to my uncle, he had made use of the power vested in his hands by my father,

and passing over my uncle entirely, settled his property on himself and children exclusively. The knowledge of this circumstance redoubled my father's assiduity in every other instance to promote his happiness and prosperity.

" A few years after my grandfather's death, my father married Miss Otwage, acknowledged by all who have seen and known her to be one of the most beautiful and accomplished women of her time.

" My father, as I believe I once told you, was a passionate admirer of beauty, and naturally generous, but unguarded in his disposition. The woman who possessed his heart guided him at pleasure ; and, had my dear mother lived, he would have ended his career in life, as he commenced it, with the deserved character of unbounded generosity and unsullied honour : but, forgetful of the woman who reflected such lustre on his early choice, he has degraded her memory, irreparably disgraced his own character, and overpowered me with feelings I once thought I never could have endured. Pardon this digression ; my

heart at this moment feels bursting with emotions I can neither subdue nor suppress.

“ My father’s understanding, though brilliant and lively, was unfortunately not solid; too much guided by his affections, over those whom he loved, he never could exercise the slightest control ; and from my infancy he took pleasure in teaching me to treat him with the most unbounded freedom ; never either inspiring or wishing to inspire me with the slightest degree of awe. My mother loving me with the same or even greater, because more useful, tenderness than my father, sedulously promoted my early friendship for Elmore, not only to gratify me with his society, but also to rouse me to emulation in the pursuit of those studies she so strenuously recommended : for this purpose she prevailed on Sir Henry Elmore, who was a distant relation of her own, to permit his son to reside entirely at the Park ; and he became, as he deserved, next to my parents, the dearest object of my affections.

“ Thus, peculiarly blessed, passed the early years of my life, till I had nearly completed

my twentieth year, when I experienced a shock, which to this hour I remember with sensations of the bitterest sorrow, in the death of a mother, who possessed and deserved all the affection I was capable of feeling. Of this you will be a better judge when I tell you that the last hours of her life were employed in charging me, by all the tenderness I had felt for her to act up to the principles of religion and honour she had so assiduously laboured to instil into my mind, and never, as I valued her dying blessing, to sink into vice. Considering herself as almost equally responsible for Elmore's future conduct as for mine, to him she gave a similar charge, and, joining our hands in hers, bade us through life preserve the affection we then felt, and mutually to guard each other in the trials and temptations that might cross our path ; and I trust we have mutually obeyed.

“ For some months after this event my father yielded himself a prey to sorrow, from which I thought at the time he never could have recovered. Elmore and myself, who had just then quitted college, with the devotion he so well deserved from us, gave up our whole time to alleviate his feelings, and we had at length the

pleasure of seeing him restored to cheerfulness. As Elmore was designed by his friends for the army, and as I was desirous to embrace the same profession, I obtained my father's consent to enter it at the same period.

" We had not more than a month joined when we were recalled to Sedley Park, to welcome my uncle's return to the scene of his youth from India, where he had followed to the grave the beloved object for whom he had sacrificed his country and friends, and an only son, of the greatest promise. The strong likeness I bore to this lost son, joined to the similarity of our age, so strongly recalled him to my uncle's recollection, that he was for several days unable to recover the same degree of composure he had acquired previous to my arrival.

" My uncle was accompanied by his three daughters. My father, enchanted by this return of a brother he had always so tenderly loved, and whose sight recalled all the pleasing recollections of his early days, was in extravagant spirits; and, though surprised, I was gratified by his animation, which seemed to pour balm into my uncle's wounded feelings.

" The day after my uncle's departure, my

eldest sister, requesting a private conference with me, informed me that a very handsome artful girl, who lived with her as own maid, had acquired such improper influence over my father, as rendered the house very disagreeable, if not even unfit for her and my sister Emma to reside in ; and, though she had discharged her on making the discovery, she still remained ; adding, that it now appeared she was the person who had induced my father to consent to my going into the army, which he had, at first, vehemently opposed.

“ Equally grieved and shocked by this information, I instantly, though in a respectful manner, remonstrated with my father on the indelicacy of permitting this woman to reside in the same house with my sisters ; but, as he had unhappily arrived at that period of life when the understanding begins to decline apace, and when, as in early youth, we resign ourselves to the guidance of those who have an influence over us, far from yielding to my representations or entreaties, he accused me of impertinence for presuming to interfere : telling me, in very explicit terms, that he no longer desired the

~~presence~~ of a son, who so far forgot the duty and respect he owed him.

“Justly offended by the indecorum of my father’s conduct, I immediately left his house, and set out for my uncle’s, to request his advice. Elmore remained with my sisters; for, as he had forborne any interference, my father continued to treat him with his former kindness.

“My uncle was grieved by my recital; but the obligations he owed to my father, and the affection that had ever subsisted between them, restrained him from making more than one fruitless effort to induce him to dismiss the woman from his house. Finding this unattainable, he contented himself with taking my two sisters to reside with him and his daughters, and he continued on the same terms as usual with my father.

“A few months after my return to Dublin, where our regiment was at that time quartered, we received orders to hold overselves in readiness for foreign service. Never before having had the slightest quarrel with my father, I felt unwilling to quit my native country, with a chance of not again perhaps returning to it,

without seeking a reconciliation, and bidding him farewell. I wrote several letters to him, apologizing for the conduct that had offended him, and entreating permission to see him previous to my going abroad ; but, receiving no answer, I at length set out with Elmore to my uncle's, to see and take leave of him and my sisters.

At my uncle's I met my father, who positively denied having ever received any of my letters, and readily accepted my apology for what had incurred his displeasure ; frankly telling me, that, if I thought proper to confine my attention to the regulation of my own conduct, he was perfectly content to leave me to my own disposal, and to continue on the terms to which we had ever been accustomed.

"I cannot say this declaration exactly pleased me, though I made no objection ; and, as no human being could long live at enmity with my father, I gladly resumed the old familiarity that had subsisted between us, and thus we parted.

"On the Continent our regiment remained five years, during which period my eldest sister

was married. As both Elmore's health and mine had suffered severely from foreign climates, and the hardships of the campaigns in which we had served, immediately after our arrival in England we obtained leave of absence, and set out for Sedley-Park.

" My father received us with great kindness, and, for several days after our arrival, appeared delighted to talk over the various scenes in which we had been engaged during our absence; but the misguided woman who had obtained such an unhappy influence over him, dreading, I suppose, that I should now make a second effort to wean him from so disgraceful an attachment, shewed such discontent at the longer continuance of my visit, that I was compelled to leave the Park, perceiving, from the petulance of my father's manner, that my prolonged stay would produce a second quarrel between us. Desirous to avoid this, I set out for my uncle's, whither Elmore accompanied me.

" I must here mention a circumstance that occurred, previous to my leaving my uncle's, which will convince you how well justified I

must have considered myself in the solemn assurance I gave you, that from my father I neither expected nor dreaded the slightest opposition; the which you may not unjustly have remembered to my disadvantage.

"One evening that my father, my uncle, Elmore, and myself, were sitting together after dinner, without any previous hint of his wishes, my father abruptly said that he thought me full old enough to marry, and asked me if I had yet disposed of my heart. I imagined he was jesting, and therefore replied, with a laugh, that I had not yet discovered whether I had a heart to dispose of. He had never, he said, suspected me of having much; but he added that, since I was so indifferent to the fair sex in general, he hoped I would have no objection to a wife of his selection, naming a lady whom he particularly wished me to marry.

"Now convinced he was serious, I as seriously replied, that I must beg leave to decline any proposal of the kind; that to the lady he named I had both personal and family objections; and, independent of every other consideration, I had determined never to marry, not only till I had

discovered whether I had a heart to give, but till I could also find one I should wish to take in exchange for it. My father laughed ; said it was a very wise resolution ; though he feared, if I adhered to it, I should die a bachelor, as he did not think I should find any woman disposed to give her heart in exchange for so cold a substance as he believed inhabited my breast. He did not, however, pretend to any right of dictating ; I was old enough to judge for myself, and, he verily thought wise enough ; and provided I continued, as I had latterly done, to avoid any interference in a subject on which I had no business to offer an opinion, he was perfectly content to leave me uncontrolled master of my actions and inclinations, as marriage was a subject on which every man at my time of life should be left independent. I have been thus particular, to exculpate myself from any charge of intentional deception ; and both my uncle and Elmore will at any time, or to any person, vouch for the truth of this statement.

“ To enter on the occurrences that took place at Belle Vue, is needless ; earnestly do I hope they are yet impressed on your memory, though

not in the vivid and painful colours they have so long been engraven on mine.

“ Elmore insists that I shall as explicitly mention his conduct as I have my own; and with this request I comply, in order to gratify his earnest desire of your viewing his character and disposition in their true colours; and also because the late conduct of both of us has been actuated by the same reasons.

“ From the circumstances of our early lives, and the friendship that has subsisted between us, I need scarcely say neither ever had an idea of disguising his thoughts or intentions from the other; and, the moment I had tranquillized the first fervour of my feelings on the night of my discovery of the error into which Charles Montague had led me, we consulted on the best mode to pursue to induce my father to increase my allowance. His expensive disposition, and the unfortunate claims he had allowed to clog his fortune, had disabled him from making my income as large as he would have otherwise done, and, as I told you at the time, it was so extremely limited, as not unfrequently to subject me to ridicule for not indulg-

ing in amusements which I had not means to command. Aware that, however disinterested you were, however generously you might consent to resign present splendour, and, without repining, accept all that, under existing circumstances, I could offer, from Mr. Montague I could not expect a concession, to which the state of your fortune must render him peculiarly averse. Elmore and I agreed to apply to my uncle Sedley, who had repeatedly declared if in any instance I required his services, and hesitated to demand them, he should consider it the cruellest wound a child of my father's could give to his feelings; and as he had acquired an immense fortune in India, and as I knew he had a large sum of money lying in his banker's hands, I determined to solicit his assistance to enable me to pay a specified sum which my father had frankly said he would on my marriage demand from me, as the only terms on which he could increase my income when such an event should take place.

“ Such were the motives that governed my conduct, and induced me to request a little time

to arrange my affairs, previous to any application to Mr. Montague, whom I could not, from feelings of regard and delicacy towards my father, endure to apprise of these particulars ; —conduct which has exposed me to apparently well-grounded suspicions of dishonourable intentions, as foreign to my principles as to my practice. But this I could not at the time mention to you ; pride and propriety withheld the communication, and would for ever have withheld it ; had not the cruel necessity that has since arisen, of vindicating myself from the charge of duplicity and dishonour, compelled the reluctant confession.

“ On my return from B—— late in the evening of the ensuing day, my servant put two letters into my hand ; one from my uncle, to inform me he had that morning landed in Dublin, and to assure me that his best services, and the unlimited command of his fortune, I might consider myself as entitled to demand, as nothing more than was due to my father’s child, independent of the strong personal affection he felt for me.

“ Delighted by this full confirmation of all the

hopes I had formed, I opened Mr. Montague's letter, and even at this moment shudder at a recollection of the feelings the perusal inspired. I read and re-read the letter, endeavouring in every possible way to account for it ; but no rational cause could I assign, except one that made my blood freeze with horror,—that you must yourself have given the information to Mr. Montague which had induced him to write such a letter.

“ This, however, was a suggestion I could not endure ; I drove it hastily from me, and passed the night in agonies no language can describe, intending to go to Belle Vue to demand an explanation. I watched with feverish impatience for the approach of morn ; but, when it arrived, my resolution incessantly wavered. Elmore absent, no human being to whom I could apply for advice, I became every instant more frantic ; and, conscious there was no act of desperation I could not in such a state of mind have been urged to commit, I at length determined to write to you, and by your answer to be guided as to what part I ought to act.

“ Pouring out my feelings to you insensibly

soothed me ; and, before I had concluded my letter, I was calmed by the hope that your answer would restore me to happiness.—I looked at your picture : no countenance, such as it so faithfully represented, could belong to one deliberately cruel and treacherous ; and though in a fever of anxiety, of which no human being who has not experienced it can form an adequate idea, I watched for the return of my servant with a conviction that he would be the messenger of peace and delight. He returned, and brought no answer ! Again all my fears revived ; and the only effort of recollection I could command, was a desire that no person should be admitted to my room till Elmore's return.

“ Before that period arrived your letter was put into my hand, accompanied by Montague's to Elmore. From the moment I read them, I do not distinctly remember my feelings or my actions. I believe I remained nearly in a state of insensibility till aroused by the entrance of Elmore, who, eagerly demanded what had occurred.

“ I made no reply ; I merely pointed to the

open letters lying on the table before me. His transports of fury on reading them broke through the torpor that had seized my faculties, and restored me to a sufficient recollection of what had passed, to ask what I ought to do. Not immediately could he reply to the question, nor was I able to repeat the demand ; but, when he had exhausted himself by fruitless indignation, he said it must be a plan laid by you to deceive me ; that no other person except you and himself knew the particulars of my situation, or what had passed between us ; and therefore, by you only could the information that had produced his letter have been given to Mr. Montague ; the whole tenour of your own clearly proved that you had designedly provoked him to insult me, and thus break off the affair.

“ I replied that I cared not ; all I wished him to say was, how I should act. To leave the country instantly, he said ; I had already obtained leave of absence, and my going could excite no surprise. He would apply to Colonel Coote for permission to accompany me, and would give immediate orders to prepare for our journey.

“ Aroused by this, I told him I never would leave the country without first avenging the insult I had received ; but he insisted that I should not attempt it, nor suffer the world to suppose I placed so much value on a woman who had either basely deceived, or wantonly injured me.

“ Unable to resist, or reply to his vehemence, in stupid silence I heard him give the necessary orders for our departure, and saw him sit down to answer Montague’s letter. After a violent struggle with his feelings, he framed a reply, in terms of cold acquiescence, to his wish of absenting himself from Belle Vue. To demand an explanation from either him or his father was my most earnest entreaty, abhorring the idea of being thus dragged away ; but he denied me permission to consult my own wishes, and I found myself perfectly unequal either to contend with or oppose him.

“ The remainder of the night we passed together ; and as my repugnance to leave C—— hourly increased, on his telling me in the morning that the carriage was at the door, and that he had obtained Colonel Coote’s per-

mission to accompany me, I made a last effort to follow my own inclination of demanding an explanation from Charles Montague before I quitted C——; but Elmore was resolutely determined on my compliance with his advice, or rather commands, and I was compelled, however reluctantly, to submit.

“ The woods of Belle Vue rising before me again renewed my transports ; and, no longer capable of reflection, it required Elmore’s utmost exertions to withhold me from bursting open the carriage-door, and proceeding thither ; but his strength overpowering mine, he succeeded in detaining me. Exhausted by the fruitless efforts I had made to effect my purpose I threw myself back in the carriage in sullen silence, and soon sank into a sleep, so deep and heavy, that, on arriving at the inn where we were to pass the night, Elmore could scarcely rouse me sufficiently to get me into the house.

“ Here I was obliged to remain for some days before I was able to proceed on my journey ; and having, at the end of that time, in some degree recovered the use of my faculties, I

told Elmore, that though he had compelled my compliance with all his other wishes, to Dublin, to meet my uncle, I would not go, as I could not endure to wound his feelings, or any farther rack my own, by meeting him in circumstances so different from those I had fondly expected.

“ He replied he would not urge me to any disagreeable step ; that he had been prompted merely by his strong affection to use the wholesome violence I had compelled him to exert, and, the moment my present passion subsided, he knew I should be pleased to have been prevented from expressing feelings I should then consider so wounding to my pride ; that he had already written to my uncle to say, unforeseen circumstances had retarded my meeting him, and would now, if I wished it, give him a circumstantial detail of what had occurred to account for my absence, and would then go with me wherever I chose.

“ Insensible to every feeling but those of tumultuous rage and revenge, I sullenly replied he might do as he pleased ; I cared not what he did, since he had so obstinately withheld

me from acting the only part that could afford me a moment's satisfaction. He had the generosity, the magnanimity to listen to the unjust reproaches of madness and despair, without expressing, or even feeling, one sentiment of displeasure towards me, bearing with my violence and injustice, and soothing my alternate transports of fury and sorrow, without a reproach for either.

" Long I could not remain insensible to friendship, such as I believe few men have experienced ; and, throwing myself wholly on his affection and kindness for relief, I recovered from the sullenness I had at first cherished, and argued and debated over all that had occurred ; we weighed and considered every circumstance that had passed, but, such was the impenetrable mystery that then unhappily involved all your actions, and those of your family, that we could not acquit you. That you had not returned my picture, or demanded your own, dwelt incessantly on my mind as an argument that you had been compelled to the conduct you had practised ; but then faint hopes were silenced by the torturing

suggestion, that only from yourself could Mr. Montague have learned a circumstance which he had been taught to consider so disgraceful. The reply, that the gift of the picture you had either forgotten, or, with the same unfeeling coquetry you had already adopted, left it unclaimed for the purpose of still farther torturing me, struck like poison to my breast ; and though, with all the perverseness of wretchedness, I refused Elmore's entreaties to give it into his possession, I could not endure to open the drawer of my writing-box, into which I had thrown it.

“ I returned to C——, on hearing that you and your family had quitted Belle Vue, a prey to anguish no words can express ; for, though a dread of meeting insults I should be called on to resent, and thus publish to the world that I had become a contemptible dupe to one who might with apparent justice say I had endeavoured to beguile her into a clandestine engagement, withheld me, when returned to the use of my reason, from seeking an explanation, yet never could I feel satisfied what judgment to form of your conduct. Elmore has, since our

last meeting, confessed, that whatever pains he had taken to convince me that he had no doubt of your perfidy, yet that similar fears had alone prevented him from taking such a step, which, after Montague's letter to him, he could not by any other means effect than by a direct application for the purpose.

" You may perhaps ask, for what purpose I have entered on this long detail ? Partly from the inexpressible relief I feel in pouring forth to you all the sufferings that have so long oppressed me ; and much more for the purpose of explaining why, after such proofs of your tenderness, candour, and generosity, I could have been again induced to suspect you.

" Thus passed a period of never-to-be-forgotten misery, increased by being incessantly exposed to Mr. French's unwearied persecutions and intolerable levity of remark, till so violent a quarrel took place between us, that, had not Colonel Coote interfered, and insisted on French's making an apology, I might have had a chance of ending my sufferings in a way of all others I should have least, in a cool moment, desired ; and though I then endeavoured

to conciliate French by apologizing to him for having so violently repelled his thoughtless curiosity, yet he never could brook the wound his pride had received in being compelled by the Colonel to make the first advances towards a reconciliation ; and so incessantly harassed me by his petulance, which an unwillingness to disoblige Colonel Coote induced me to overlook, that I at length resolved to quit a scene where all, except my poor Henry, seemed combined to oppress me, and therefore came to Dublin for the purpose of negotiating an exchange into a regiment under orders for Spain. Had it not been for this conduct of Mr. French, I might have long continued to hang a helpless burden on Elmore, depending on him for every shadow of peace I enjoyed, yet, the moment I thought of this plan, I became eagerly anxious to hasten my departure. Elmore, far from opposing, applauded my resolution, and determined to accompany me. We both used our utmost exertions to accomplish our wishes ; but my regard for Henry obliged me, however unwillingly, to postpone my intentions, as I could not, with all the ac-

tivity and interest I could exert, procure an exchange for him of equal rank and standing with that he possessed in our own regiment. Though indifferent to such a circumstance for myself, I could not selfishly sacrifice his interest to my wishes, as the army was the only profession in which he could expect to rise to rank or wealth ; and as he declared he would not suffer me to go without him, nor could I endure to part with him, I was obliged to delay my departure till I could overcome this obstacle.

“ During the period of my stay in Dublin, now nearly two months, I have, with restless impatience, watched every carriage, every person I met in the street, whose figure recalled yours to my recollection, to judge, if possible, by your countenance, how far you had deceived me ; though, after what I had suffered while it spoke all that was generous, feeling, and candid, how was it now to be depended on ? And yet my misery hourly increased, by being constantly disappointed, as I carefully shunned mixing in any society, or renewing my intimacy with any family I had formerly known ; and thus

you remained ignorant of my being in town, and concluded I had, as I believe it was reported, sailed for Spain.

" On the arrival of the regiment in town, Elmore, dreading the idea of any renewal of acquaintance with the Montague family, related my situation to Colonel Coote, who instantly agreed to his request of declining to wait on them, and thus avoid any chance of still farther wounding my feelings, by either meeting your family, or hearing you spoken of ; and French, who is his relation, at his desire, at length consented to pursue the same conduct.

" The fortunate evening of our meeting at the theatre,—an evening I shall never remember without sensations of the deepest gratitude,—I had fallen into one of those fits of dejection under which I so frequently laboured. Unable either to read, or to converse with Elmore, who was sitting with me, I continued to pace my room in silence, till he at length prevailed on me to accompany him to the play, after first extorting my promise of withdrawing, if any of the Montague family should be in the house,

" It was extremely late when we went in. Immediately my eyes rested on your pale, your altered countenance. I stood rooted to the spot,—every thought and feeling sunk in the single idea, that you could not be thus changed if you had intentionally deceived me ; in a few moments our eyes met, and that single glance conveyed volumes—told me at once that I had injured you.

" The moment Elmore heard you mention my father's letter, that the whole had been some base stratagem of the woman who has so long enslaved his understanding instantly struck him, and it was to ascertain this I was so anxious to learn its contents, well knowing that my father's style of writing she could not have adopted. How shall I express my sensations on reading the one Mrs Enesy put into my hand ? I ought not to give them utterance, when compelled to confess that Elmore and myself have been alike deceived in our expectations, and that it was indisputably written by my father.

" You must not ask me why, after such a confession, I have ventured to address you. I

cannot, will not, now resign you ; and, before this reaches you, Elmore and myself will be far on our journey to demand an explanation of what has so cruelly tortured—I may now say with truth, nor accuse me of selfish vanity if I add, with a sensation of delight—what has so cruelly tortured both.

“By my uncle Sedley, by myself, by every member of my family, shall the amplest apology be made to yours. To you, my Sidney, I shall not offer any ; you have not confounded me with my father, and for him I can offer none ; but every concession due to the justly-offended pride of your family shall be made ; and whatever influence a woman, I cannot now think of without detestation, has acquired over my father’s mind, he will not long remain insensible to the voice of truth. My uncle will cheerfully undertake the office of undeceiving him, not only from affection to me, but to retrieve, as far as he can, the honour of a brother he has so ardently loved ; and when my father’s apology is conveyed to Mr. Montague by my uncle, accompanied by a fair representation of facts, I will not,

indulge the fear that offended pride will prevail over every other consideration ; and that, when convinced I never intended the slightest disrespect to him or his family, he will obstinately persist in dooming me to misery. I will at least make the trial, and Elmore comes with me, for the purpose of assisting in discovering the means that have been used to deceive my father into such conduct, as to him he will more readily avow his feelings than even to my uncle. Elmore has ever enjoyed his fullest confidence and most familiar affection ; and the same motives of shame that might induce him to conceal the real facts from my uncle will not influence him with Elmore. When this matter is finally settled, and all the previous arrangements I had intended to make are completed, then will I return to Dublin with my uncle, and try my final chance. Disappointment I cannot endure to anticipate.

“ I have sat up all night to write this letter, which I feel a pleasing confidence you will not consider as tedious. Oh ! no ; judging of your feelings by my own, I will not listen to such

an apprehension ; and I experience the most feverish impatience for a recital of what has occurred since our last meeting at Belle Vue.

“ Elmore has just left me to order the carriage to the door. I too well remember all you ever told me to forget the words you used, when, on a former occasion, I offered an apology for Elmore, ‘ that kindness to me you would ever consider as an obligation to yourself.’ These words, my beloved Miss Montague, I now call on you to remember, as I cannot doubt your generous forgiveness of errors into which I was so irresistibly hurried ; and from which, under existing circumstances, no human foresight could have preserved me ; and I shall therefore consider myself as placed in the same situation as I was the evening you uttered them. This hope your every look and every word has assured me I shall not find delusive ; and as now applied to Elmore, the most affectionate and generous of human beings, I will consider them ; and will therefore join his name with my own in thanks, and ardent wishes for the moment when we shall, as in former times, enjoy the unalloyed

pleasure of your society. For my sake take care of your health, tranquillize your spirits, banish every apprehension that oppresses you. Your uncle or Charles I never will meet except on terms of friendship ; and let your good wishes and affection follow the steps and accompany the efforts of one, who, with more tenderness than he can find words to express, will ever remain your devoted

Friday Morning. “ O. A. SEDLEY.”

The complicated emotions which Sidney experienced, on a perusal of this letter, Mrs. Enesy's presence was unequal to restrain ; and she continued to weep in silence long after she had ceased reading it. Mrs. Enesy, affected by her excessive agitation, at length said, she hoped Major Sedley's explanation of conduct, which must have appeared so extraordinary, had not increased her regret for the past.

“ Oh, no,” cried she, in a mournful tone, “ it has only convinced me of my own injustice, of the injustice of my family, in attaching the suspicion of dishonour to one whose de-

liçacy and generosity have alone exposed him to sufferings, the recital of which has pierced me to the soul." Then, putting the packet into Mrs. Enesy's hand, added, " After so frankly confiding in you, Major Sedley cannot have any reluctance to your reading the full explanation of conduct that has been so much misunderstood. Will you, therefore, cast your eye over these sheets, and I will then relate what has compelled me to wound the feelings of a man whose thoughts and actions prove him more than deserving of my affection?"

Mrs. Enesy, pitying her emotion, took the papers in silence. Sidney, with renewed sensations of grief and tenderness, reflected on all she had just read, which so clearly shewed that the truest affection, and the tenderest feelings, had alone prompted the conduct which had exposed Sedley to her uncle's harsh suspicion ; since, from a wish of saving her the pain of knowing the difficulties into which the embarrassed state of her fortune had plunged him, had his desire of a few weeks secrecy entirely resulted. " Ah !" thought she, " who ought to presume to judge their fellow

creatures? Is it for erring mortals to venture to decide upon appearances? I have been led to accuse my generous Sedley of want of duty, of unkindness, and a determined resolution to forget and insult me; and yet, from delicacy to an undeserving father, from affection to me, has he encountered all he has suffered; and, at the very time I endeavoured to banish his remembrance from my mind, he was the prey of anguish, which no ardour of mine can repay. Weakly, rashly, have I suspected him of perfidy, from which his noble and generous soul would recoil with horror. How unworthy have I proved myself of the devoted tenderness he has felt for me! and how could he, under such circumstances, have preserved his attachment to me, who apparently made so ungrateful a return for conduct that few, but very few, would have practised?"

Thus, yielding herself a prey to sorrow and remorse for the misery she had, though undesignedly, given to the noble-minded Sedley, scarcely could she experience a ray of pleasure at this full conviction of his consistent and dignified behaviour, or at the hopes his

letter was so well calculated to inspire, that, through his own, and his uncle Sedley's exertions, Mr. Montague might be induced to pardon the insult he had received, and consent to an union on which the happiness of both depended. But the recollection that Sedley, like herself, had been the dupe of appearances, had accused her of perfidy at the very moment when her heart was torn by sufferings almost as severe as his own, in some degree alleviated her regret, by convincing her, that, so circumstanced, to have been insensible to the whisperings of suspicion could only have resulted from the weakest and most romantic folly, deaf to the suggestions of reason and of common sense.

Mrs. Enesy, having finished the long narrative, said, "Suffer me, my dearest Sidney, to congratulate you on the happy prospect which opens before you of an end to all the uneasiness you have so long and so cruelly endured, which, believe me, I have sincerely deplored, though delicacy forbade me from expressing my feelings; as, what you did no

wish to communicate, I did not wish to seem acquainted with."

Sidney thanked her, with great warmth for her kindness ; then added, " If I have been reserved, my dear Mrs. Enesy, suffer my situation to plead my apology. From the time of the Major's full declaration of his sentiments, till the period of his dismissal by my uncle, I was not at liberty to communicate proposals he so earnestly requested might remain secret for a short time ; and, from the day my uncle received Mr. Sedley's letter, to the present, I have not been in a state of spirits to venture at such a communication."

" Believe me, my dear Sidney," replied Mrs. Enesy, smiling, " I require no apology for prudence I so greatly admire ; for, much as I must and do esteem candour, yet these transactions are most improper to discuss except with your own family ; and though I might, perhaps, have proved an exception to this general rule, your knowledge of me was not of sufficient length to warrant such implicit confidence in my judgment. As Major Sedley's friend, you might naturally

have felt a proud repugnance to confide to me the unjustifiable insult you had received from his family. I will now give you an explanation of the motives that have induced me to act a part, to which, pardon me for saying so, I was at first extremely reluctant. At the time you spent with me at Mount Enesy I laboured under a mistake in believing Charles Montague to be the object of your affections, as such was at that time the common report of the country, founded, I suppose, as such reports usually are, on the simple circumstance of your residing in the same house. In this error I remained till after your going to Dublin, when I heard from different people that a quarrel had taken place between Mr. Montague and Major Sedley; the report originating among Mr. Montague's servants, who all declared that you had occasioned it, though how, except from their own surmises, they could not tell. Little disposed to credit such a report, from the circumstance I have already mentioned, I paid no attention to it till Major Sedley's absenting himself from Mount Enesy, on his return to the country, and the strange

alteration I heard had taken place in his manners, induced me one day to ask Captain Elmore if there was any foundation in such a report. His confusion on hearing the question asked, and his turning instantly to one of the children, to avoid a reply by seeming not to have heard it, convinced me that something disagreeable must have occurred, and I made no second inquiry. Offended by Major Sedley's not coming to see me, I never thought more on the subject till one day that I happened to dine at Mr. Radcliffe's, where I met the Major, when I felt all the displeasure I had indulged towards him change into pity, on observing how greatly he was altered; I addressed him with all my former kindness, without noticing his never having come to see me since his return to C——. But his manner was as much changed as his appearance: he scarcely replied to my questions, and seemed so evidently to dislike entering into conversation that I soon gave up any attempt to renew our former intimacy. What could have produced such feelings in his mind towards me I could not conjecture;

though for the change in his appearance I was no longer at a loss to account, as Sophy Radcliffe told me she had heard from Anna Montague of your uncle's dismission of Sedley, though of the particulars she either did not, or could not, inform me; but, as neither Captain Elmore nor the Major seemed inclined to place any confidence in me, I made no effort to discover what they seemed so desirous to conceal. They soon after left C—, nor did I, except from common report, hear any thing farther concerning them till the night you met them at the play, when, very late in the evening, I received a note from Captain Elmore, apologizing for his and the Major's late inattention, the reasons of which they would explain in the morning, when they intended to breakfast with me, expressing a hope that I should be alone, as they were anxious to speak to me in private. They came very early; and, as Mr. Ensy left us the moment breakfast was over, Major Sedley, after apologizing for his conduct by avowing the distracted state of his mind, said, that his reserve to me had been dictated by a fear, that,

so long settled in the neighbourhood of the Montagues, I might have so far forgotten my early friendship and connexion with his family as to feel displeased at any imputation cast on their honour. Though hurt that he could have entertained such a suspicion, I forbore any reproaches, in pity to his feelings, and listened in silence to his relation of your meeting at the theatre, and the conversation that had taken place between you. In compliance with his and Captain Elmore's entreaties, and influenced equally by the conviction that your injured health and faded bloom originated in the same source with his own altered appearance, I at length consented to undertake the commission with which he intrusted me, convinced that, however the natural excellence of his temper and disposition, his penetration, and justice might have been warped by the unhappiness he had endured, he was a young man of the strictest principles of honour; and well aware, from the domestic situation of his family, that he had but too much reason to suspect his father's letter was a forgery. That it was not, you already know:

sincerely am I grieved to think that Mr. Sedley has so strangely sullied his former character for honour and generosity, as to be induced, by any persuasion, to cast so dark a shade over the many amiable and estimable qualities that reflected so bright a lustre on his early career. Most truly has his son related the simple facts of all his kind and generous conduct to his brother and my poor aunt, whose unfortunate attachment to General Sedley involved her in misery for many years of her life, as all her family violently resented her determined resolution of remaining faithful to him after his father's haughty rejection of her. I have now, my dear Sidney, candidly told you all my motives for an interference that an unwillingness to act any part in so delicate an affair made me extremely fearful of undertaking ; but, as an application to Charles Montague might have produced very unpleasant consequences, I was anxious to prevent it, and earnestly hope my interference may be the means of restoring you and poor Major Sedley to happiness ; for, much as he offended me by his reserve, and by the motives he

assigned for it, yet I truly esteem both him and his friend, and consider them as deserving of every blessing this world can afford."

With animated pleasure Sidney listened to these praises of Sedley, this assurance that Mrs. Enesy entertained no fears of his success ; and, after expressing her gratitude to her with much warmth, she related all that had occurred on the receipt of Mr. Sedley's letter, frankly avowing the misery it had given her. Mrs. Enesy, relieved from the fears which delicacy had suggested, of having been considered as intruding herself into an affair which had been cautiously concealed from her till her services had been required, so fervently expressed her pleasure, that Sidney felt the obligation she had conferred doubly enhanced by the manner in which it was bestowed.

On her return to Merrion-square, Sidney was somewhat alarmed at perceiving, by Charles's countenance and manner, that he was extremely displeased ; and Sedley, the constant object of her thoughts, instantly occurring, she dreaded that he had by some means learned his recent application.

Very soon after Mrs. Montague had returned to the drawing-room, Charles entered, and asked Sidney to come out and walk with him in the square.

With this request she complied, though it increased her apprehension of his having discovered what she was, for the present, so anxious to conceal from him ; but, soothed by the recollection that Sedley was out of town, and of his solemn promise never to meet her uncle or cousin except on terms of friendship, she determined to avow what had passed, if any hint had been given to Charles on the subject.

Charles proceeded in silence till withinside the square ; then, abruptly addressing her, he asked what her final resolutions were, that she had so decidedly dismissed Mr. Savage.

This question, though it relieved Sidney's fears of his having heard of her meeting with Major Sedley, disconcerted her, from the tone in which it was asked ; and she paused for a moment before she could reply that she had invariably expressed the same determination.

" Did you not promise," cried Charles, hastily, " to be guided by my wishes, and take some time for deliberation? and have you done so?"

" I have endeavoured to be guided by your wishes," said Sidney, blushing; " with what success it is needless to say; but, with respect to Mr. Savage, my declaration has always been the same."

" I don't understand what you mean," said he, angrily; " was it not my entreaty that you would endeavour to recover your spirits, and banish all romantic folly from your mind, and suffer Savage's merit to have that weight with you which it ought?"

" And may I not with more justice remind you of your declaration, that, with respect to Mr. Savage, you would leave me at liberty."

" So then," exclaimed Charles, vehemently, " you have dismissed Savage for ever?"

" I have," she replied steadily; " and I never intended to act any other part."

" In future, then," cried he, " act as you please; I will never again trouble you with my advice. I did think you would at least

have taken time for consideration before you came to so rash a resolution, when Savage was content to await your own inclination ; I can only regret that he has thrown away his time, and my friendship, to so little purpose."

" How can you be so unjust, Charles ?" cried she, reproachfully ; " have I ever sought to deceive either you or Mr. Savage ? Have I ever given any reason to believe that I felt any doubt as to the part I ought to act ?"

" No ; of that I must not accuse you ; though I must of very foolishly trifling with your establishment in life. You will hereafter regret your conduct, though I shall not again interfere, or any farther urge you on that or any other subject, when so well convinced how little attention you wish to pay to my feelings or advice."

" This is somewhat unjust, Charles," cried she, warmly ; " to your wishes and advice I have yielded as far as I could ; but how can I make your wishes mine ? Could you know my heart and feelings at this moment, you would then be convinced of the purity of my actions."

" Do you intend this as a declaration of

your still encouraging your weak attachment to a man I abhor?" cried Charles, reddening, "do you intend, like Fanny Beauchamp, to follow your own wishes in defiance of all propriety?"

"How can you make such a speech?" said Sidney, shocked by his vehemence, "or draw such a comparison between Major Sedley and Sir Townly Beauchamp? Can there be two men more unlike?"

"I make no comparison between them," cried Charles, angrily; "I am not so unjust; but neither I believe is there much similarity between you and Lady Beauchamp; and yet you are determined to follow her example; and, though not precisely in the same way, to equally destroy your happiness, and wound the feelings of your family."

"I have never done so," said Sidney, offended and alarmed; "nor I never will; and, when time convinces you of your injustice, you will be sorry for your conduct."

"I am not unjust in censuring you, severely censuring you, for indulging such feelings; nor can time ever reconcile me to the

idea of your encouraging weak tenderness for a man whose family has insulted yours, and who has himself forsaken you."

"How do you know that he has done so?" said Sidney, in a faltering voice; "from whom have you received such information?"

"Has any person told you that he has not?" replied he, darting at her a look of wrath and inquiry; "has any person endeavoured to deceive you? If they have," — — — He checked himself, and remained silent.

Sidney, overpowered by his warmth, and half-uttered threat, not daring to avow what had passed, nor able to deny that she had been convinced he had not forsaken her, trembled with apprehension, without being able or willing to speak. Charles, having waited in vain expectation of an answer, resumed,— "Beware, Sidney, you had better beware how you listen to any false friend, who might wish to lead you into error. You are not, like Lady Beauchamp, devoid of feeling; you had better therefore be cautious what part you act. Sedley is not at present in the kingdom, 'tis true; but he may return; and, should he again

renew his efforts to engage you in any clandestine correspondence, remember the consequences that must and will follow."

"How, Charles," cried Sidney, "can you thus suffer the generosity of your disposition, your excellent understanding, to be warped by prejudice, when you one moment accuse Major Sedley for having forsaken me, and the next denounce vengeance against him if he should make any effort to clear up or atone for the past."

"It is not I who suffer my understanding to be clouded by prejudice; it is you who have done so. I accused Major Sedley, and with justice, of behaving ill to you, after all the violent affection he professed, by making no effort to apologize to me for his father's conduct and his own, if it was his wish to renew his addresses at any future period; but you cannot suppose I intended any justification of his basely endeavouring again to engage you in a clandestine correspondence, as I am now convinced, he before intended: if he has done so," continued he, looking steadfastly at her, "if he makes a single effort to do

so, he shall meet the punishment he deserves."

Sidney, roused to an exertion of fortitude, to guard against the possibility of the danger which, even in idea, made her blood curdle with horror, and with an intrepidity the magnitude of the threatened evil alone inspired, suddenly stopped, and, looking at Charles with a countenance of calm firmness, said, "Do you doubt my honour, Charles? Have I ever, in any instance, deceived you or my uncle, or betrayed the confidence you have reposed in me?"

"I do not doubt your honour," replied he, "nor suspect you of having done so."

"Then I now pledge it in the most solemn manner never voluntarily to see or correspond with Major Sedley without your knowledge and my uncle's; does this satisfy you?"

"It does," cried Charles, softened, in spite of his wrath, by this unexpected concession, which he knew he had no right to demand: "but why, Sidney, do you not, in other instances, act with equal prudence and generosity?"

"Charles," cried she, "urge me no further: I have resigned the direction of my conduct wholly into your hands and my uncle's. By the promise I have given I will uniformly abide, let my happiness be ever so much the sacrifice of your pride; but more I cannot perform, and will not promise. My wishes are not in my own power. Now drop, I entreat, this conversation; and do not suffer undue resentment to obscure your justice, and deprive me of that place in your affection and confidence no voluntary act of mine has forfeited."

However dissatisfied at her determined rejection of his friend, which Savage had with the greatest indignation communicated to him, Charles could not resist this animated appeal to his feelings; and, tenderly pressing her hand, he said, that, however grieved by her rash resolution of sacrificing her happiness to a man undeserving her regard, the kindness and affection she so well deserved from him, he would ever continue to feel and evince for her. Then, dropping the subject, he told her of the steps which he and his father had taken to

answer Sir Townly's demand ; adding, that he understood Sir Townly proposed going to England immediately with his family ; and expressing great pleasure at this determination, though desiring her not to mention it to his mother, who might still weakly lament the departure of her daughter, unworthy as she was of her tenderness.

Sidney promised silence ; but her heart and thoughts, occupied by subjects foreign to Sir Townly or Lady Beauchamp, she could make no effort to join in the conversation. Charles, however internally provoked at the influence Sedley still held over her mind, would not, after her recent promise, any farther harass her by fruitless cautions, and very soon returned to the house.

The pleasure Sidney had indulged, in the prospect of Sedley's success with his family, and consequent success with hers, this conversation destroyed ; since, if such was Charles's determined resentment to Sedley, even when resigning all prospect of her marriage with Mr. Savage, what could she expect from her uncle—how hope that his pride would

be less averse to her forming such a connexion with a family, the head of which had offered him so gross an insult? Though no apprehension for the future could divest her of the consolation that the full vindication of Sedley's honour afforded, and the perfect conviction that he bore her a degree of affection beyond what she had ever believed he felt; yet her peace and tranquility were destroyed, and with restless impatience she sighed for the determination of her fate.

CHAP. XI.

DURING several succeeding days Sidney heard nothing farther of Sedley ; and as Mrs. Enesy, who had merely come to town on business, was preparing to return to the country, she was deprived of the satisfaction of pouring forth her fears to one so anxious and so equal to relieve them by affectionate kindness and judicious argument.

The day previous to her leaving town she called at Merrion-square, and, taking Sidney out in her carriage, put into her hand a letter which she had that morning received from Major Sedley. It was written to request she would immediately inform him of the state of Sidney's health, as, now that the first transport of pleasure at finding her affection unaltered had subsided, her changed countenance and recent illness rested continually on his mind, nor could he for a moment divest himself of the apprehension that he had been too late unde-

ceived, to prevent his final loss of the adored object of his fondest hopes ; nor did her image, such as to him she had appeared on the last night of their meeting, for an instant cease to occupy his imagination. He concluded by saying, his uncle had written to his father on their arrival, requesting to see him ; and they were in daily expectation of his arrival, as he had been merely detained by a fit of the gout ; but no success could now restore him to peace, nor was he adequate to any exertion while overwhelmed with such tottering apprehensions for the safety of one on whom his every hope of happiness rested.

This letter Sidney could not read without many tears, and the recollection that on her uncle and Charles depended her only hope of having it in her power to reward his attachment served to encrease them, till Mrs. Enesy reminded her of the weakness of giving way to sorrow, which the event might not justify. "In pity to poor Sedley," continued she, "endeavour to tranquillize your feelings, and recover your health, and let him not in you meet that disappointment he may not perhaps otherwise

experience. Surely, my dear Sidney, you owe such an exertion to his apprehensive tenderness ; and this I have ventured to promise in your name, as I have answered his letter, and, in pity to his feelings, rather exceeded on the pleasing side of truth, and said that, if permitted to see you on his return to town, he might expect to behold you very unlike what you had appeared to his disturbed imagination on the night you had met at the theatre. Will you then fulfil this promise ? will you endeavour to hope the best, and to acquire fortitude to meet with resignation whatever farther trials may await you ? The difficulties of such an undertaking I can well appreciate ; but the exertion is worthy of you, and will, let matters take what turn they may, afford you the truest consolation."

To make the struggle, Sidney promised ; though she could scarcely hope to accomplish so painful an exertion.

In compliance with Mrs. Enesy's parting advice, and in tenderness to Sedley, Sidney used her utmost efforts to compose her spirits, by dwelling as little as possible on the subject that would, had she permitted it, have exclu-

sively occupied his thoughts ; and, by constantly devoting her time to employment, she so far beguiled her uneasiness as in some measure to subdue the anxiety that preyed on her health and spirits.

Charles, pleased by her conduct, and by the unceasing pains she took to soften his resentment, resumed all his former kindness, so assiduously studying her happiness and amusement, that not even the dread she felt of his pride and violence proving destructive to her future peace could render her insensible to his kindness, or lessen her affection.

This reconciliation between them so deeply offended Mr. Savage, that scarcely could he forbear quarrelling with Charles ; but, determined to shew a proud indifference to the disappointment of his hopes, he so far trampled on his feelings as to visit as usual at Merrion-square, though directing his attention almost exclusively to Anna, who at once flirted with and laughed at him. Charles was piqued at his unjust resentment, the displeasure he had indulged towards Sidney gradually subsided; and he became conscious of the injustice which

the violence of his passions too often impelled him to use towards her.

Another week elapsed without any intelligence reaching her, and Sidney's fears more powerfully awakened by this delay, which Sedley's letter had not taught her to expect, could scarcely so far command her feelings as to be able to disguise them.

One morning, as the family were sitting at breakfast, a servant entered the room, and informed Mr. Montague there was a gentleman in his carriage at the door, who, on learning he was at home, had sent up a request to speak to him on business of consequence.

"What is his name, or who is he?" demanded Mr. Montague.

"I do not know, sir," replied the servant; "he is a stranger to me, nor do I know either the carriage or servants; and when I asked what name I should give in, he told me to say, a gentleman wished very particularly to see you."

"Shew him in here," said Mr. Montague.

"This is a singular message and request," resumed he angrily, when the servant was gone, "from a stranger who does not choose to avow

his name; but if, as I suspect, he comes to make any offers or demands on the part of Sir Townly Beauchamp, who may choose to desire a reconciliation, since he has obtained the whole of his wife's fortune, he shall find his caution of very little avail towards promoting his wishes."

The involuntary emotion which the delivery of this message had given to Sidney this speech subdued, as such a proceeding was more consonant to what might be expected from a friend of Sir Townly Beauchamp's than from Mr. Sedley, whose application she had always expected would be by letter, without hazarding a personal interview, till apprized with what feelings Mr. Montague would be inclined to receive his overtures.

Enraged by his father's surmise, Charles sternly fixed his eyes on the door, to watch who should enter, and his example was followed by every person present from different emotions of anger, surprise, curiosity, and fear.

In a few moments the door opened, and a gentleman entered, whose air and appearance commanded an involuntary sensation of respect

even from those so little disposed to entertain any for a man they considered an ambassador of Sir Townly Beauchamp's. He was rather in the decline of life ; though, apparently more broken by sorrow than infirmity, he still retained a striking degree of manly beauty, and the fire of his eye and intelligence of his countenance indicated the warmth of his feelings, while the fine proportion and erect stateliness of his figure conveyed an idea of grace and dignity that was calculated to inspire esteem and command respect.

After bowing to the party in general, he addressed Mr. Montague, apologizing for his intrusion at such an early hour.

His air, manner, and address, so forcibly impressed Mr. Montague with the conviction, that, though Sir Townly's friend, he was perfectly the gentleman, that, with his accustomed politeness and hospitality, he requested him to be seated, and join their breakfast party ; at the same time requesting to be favoured with his name, as he could not recollect having before had the pleasure of seeing him.

"Nor have I, sir," said the stranger, smiling,

" ever had the honour of addressing Mr. Montague, though with some members of his family I have had the happiness of being intimately acquainted ; permit me, however, to decline any mention of my name at present, and suffer me to assure you that sentiments of the sincerest respect and regard for your family, joined with those of a more personal nature, have induced my present application, in the hope of your permitting me to have some private conversation with you when at leisure."

Then taking a seat at the table, and looking at Charles, added, he believed he had the pleasure of addressing the younger Mr. Montague.

Charles bowed assent ; but, involuntarily diverted by the singularity of the scene, his native love of frolic and raillery revived, and he cast such a glance of drollery and ridicule across the table at Anna, that the stranger, however unwilling to appear to notice it, could not forbear smile . Charles a little confused at his being observed, hastily turned to Sidney, and reminded her of an engagement she had made to go out with him in his curriicle after breakfast.

On hearing her speak, the gentleman looked at her with an expression of such earnest, yet pleased attention, that Sidney, agitated by his observation, blushed excessively; when, withdrawing his eyes, he again addressed Charles, saying he hoped he would excuse his requesting him to postpone his intended drive, as he was extremely anxious to have him present at the interview with which Mr. Montague had agreed to favour him; adding an apology to Sidney for the delay.

Sidney, restored to composure by a request which convinced her that business respecting Sir Townly had alone induced this visit, since Charles's presence was required, replied, with a smile, the delay was immaterial. Charles, though much displeased at the idea of being called on to attend an interview designed to promote Sir Townly's wishes, was yet so won upon by the grace and dignity of the stranger's manners, that he agreed to his request, and a general conversation took place that still farther interested every member of the Montague family in favour of the mysterious stranger.

As soon as breakfast was over Mr. Monta-

gue arose, and led the way to his study, followed by Charles and the gentleman, who then addressed him thus:—"Motives of delicacy have thus long, sir, induced me to wave any mention of my name, extremely averse farther to wound the justly offended feelings of your family, till at liberty to offer some atonement for the unworthy treatment you have received. It is not improbable, sir, that you may have heard of General Sedley, who has now the honour of addressing you, uncle to Major Sedley, of the — dragoons. Let not my name prejudice, or my present application offend you," continued he, observing Mr. Montague about to speak, while his colour rose to crimson, "I have come but to offer the apology so indispensably due for a letter which never would have been addressed to you, had it not been for the perfidious conduct of a woman, who, taking advantage of my brother's ignorance of your family, and imposing on his too-easy faith in her assertions, has left no effort untried to seduce him into conduct so unlike his general character: and my anxiety, sir," continued he, addressing Charles, "if possible to conciliate

the friendship of one who holds so high a place in my nephew's esteem, has induced me to request your presence, and to you as well as to Mr. Montague to offer the fullest explanation, the amplest apology, that can be made for the past."

Awed by the gentle dignity of the General's manner, Charles bowed in silence, and Mr. Montague haughtily replied, "To me, General Sedley, no explanation can be given, no apology be made, that can atone for an insult such as never before was offered to a man in my situation ; nor can your brother's personal ignorance of my family plead in extenuation of his conduct, as I flatter myself, sir, I am too generally known in the world to have rendered it difficult for him to have acquired better information."

The flush of honest but forbearing pride tinged the General's cheeks at this haughty reply, and he paused for a moment, as if debating how he ought to act, when with tempered spirit and suavity, he replied, "Coming here, sir, with every wish to conciliate, every desire to atone for an insult which my feelings as a gentleman

must instruct me to consider as peculiarly wounding to yours, no personal consideration shall interfere to prevent my using every exertion to redress the injuries of a nephew, whose honour no man can impeach ; and however, sir, I respect your pride, I must be permitted to question your justice if you deny me permission to lay before you the only vindication I can offer for my brother's conduct. What part you ought then to act I shall not, sir, presume to dictate ; but, to refuse such a request, the character I had heard of Mr. Montague did not lead me to expect."

Whatever resentment Mr. Montague felt at an application that renewed all his former indignation, there was, in the matter and manner of this speech, something that forbade his refusal of the request it contained, and he coldly bowed his acquiescence. The General, restraining the feelings this conduct excited, drew a letter from his pocket, and, putting it into Mr. Montague's hand, said, with a tincture of haughtiness his utmost anxiety to conciliate could not wholly repress, " Permit me, sir, to request your perusal of that letter: with the

writing of the lady you must be too well acquainted to suffer any doubt of its authenticity to rest on your mind."

Mr. Montague, surprised at perceiving the direction in Mrs. Hamilton's hand, unfolded the letter without speaking, and read the following lines :—

" FOR WILLIAM SEDLEY, Esq.

" My dear Sir,—Influenced by the warmest gratitude for the uncommon kindness you have on many occasions shewn to both my sons, and by the esteem and regard I have ever felt for you, I take the liberty of an old friend to interest myself in your happiness, and therefore hasten to inform you of what it must be of the utmost consequence to learn in time. You are, I understand from Fortescue, who returned home a few days ago, still ignorant of the business ;—but at that I cannot wonder from my personal knowledge of the Montague family, with whose characters you are, I believe, as yet unacquainted.

" To keep you no longer in suspense, I shall briefly inform you, that from Mr. Elverton, a

brother officer of your son's, who dined here the other day, I heard in the course of conversation that Major Sedley has been for months back a very constant visitor at Mr. Montague's of Belle Vue, within a few miles of C——; and that it was understood, before he left the country, that Major Sedley either had or would immediately propose for Miss S. Montague, niece to that gentleman.

" My regard for you induced me to be very particular in my inquiries, and Mr. Elverton, who is an intimate friend of Fortescue's, acquainted me with the following circumstances : That Major Sedley, since his first going to reside at C——, has been a constant inmate of Belle Vue ; that the obvious pains taken to inveigle him into a marriage with Sidney Montague, by herself and her family, was a common subject of jest among his brother-officers, who used frequently to rally him on being the dupe of their arts, and advising him to be more cautious in his conduct ; that your son violently resented their hints, and what he termed their improper liberties with Miss Montague's name ; and that he was near engaging in a duel with one

of them, who from being his particular friend, and of course more interested in his welfare, had spoken with greater earnestness than any of the others.

" To this account, strange as it may seem, my knowledge of the Montagues induces me to give implicit credit, as I know them to be a proud, ambitious, extravagant, and, at the same time, an unprincipled family, and anxious to get rid of their niece, an artful girl destitute of fortune. Her friends indeed have endeavoured to supply that deficiency by commencing a law-suit against Fortescue for his uncle Forbes's property, with a view, I suppose, to terrify him into making some compromise, in order to avoid the enormous expenses of litigation. Her father even took possession of the property in question, till compelled by poor Mr. Hamilton to give it up, to whom it of course belonged, not only as heir-at-law, but in virtue of a deed of settlement made by his grandfather previous to his death.

" I have now, my dear friend, given you every particular I could gather of this affair, and also the character of the Montague family,

with whom I have become, unfortunately for myself and my dear Fortescue, but too well acquainted, as old Montague's younger brother was married to a sister of Mr. Hamilton's. As she poor woman, died very young, Sidney Montague, her only child, was left entirely to the care of her husband's family, in whose principles she has, I know, from the best authority, been but too well instructed, and is, like them, crafty and vindictive.

“ You will, my dear sir, take what steps you judge most prudent to prevent your son's throwing himself so lamentably away; and this I should hope will be no difficult task, as the Montagues would be extremely cautious of bringing themselves into public notice by persisting in an affair of the kind in opposition to the wishes of the young man's friends. They will only endeavour to work upon the poor young man's feelings, without appearing themselves in the business; but I hope your son will have too much sense and duty to think of acting such a part, when he finds you so decidedly averse as you must feel to his forming so wretched a connexion.

“ I shall now my dear sir, conclude by requesting that this letter may for ever remain a secret between us, as for many reasons, but more particularly from Fortescue’s unfortunate relationship with Sidney Montague, I should not wish in any way to appear in such an affair : I have only been induced to do so by my regard for you, and consequent interest in your son’s welfare ; and am, my dear sir, with very sincere wishes for your health and happiness,

“ Your affectionate,
Rutland-square, “ and obliged friend
October 180—. “ LETITIA HAMILTON.”

Mr. Montague’s transports of rage and astonishment at reading this letter so wholly overpowered him, that he returned it in silence to the General, who comprehending his feelings by his varying colour and the violence of his agitation, without again addressing him presented the letter to Charles, saying, “ Will you also, sir, read this letter, and say if you can consider it as an extenuation of my brother’s conduct, who, having lived for many years excluded from the great world, in a distant part

of the kingdom, had no opportunity of acquiring better information."

Charles, who had hitherto sat silent, not thinking himself called on to interfere, and unwilling to offer the slightest offence to a man of General Sedley's years and appearance, took the letter he presented, feeling the most intense curiosity to learn what had thus violently affected his father, or how Mrs. Hamilton, whose writing he recognised, could have interfered. Scarcely however had he cast his eye over the contents, than hastily rising from his seat, while fury started to his eyes, he exclaimed, "Good Heavens! What a sheet of slander! What a series of infamous falsehoods! And not of Sidney only, but of our whole family!" .

"The motives that must have prompted such detestable conduct," said General Sedley mildly, "I will, if permitted, endeavour to explain; and also the reasons which have kept my nephew in ignorance of his father's letter to Mr. Montague till within the last three weeks, when a very trivial circumstance led to the discovery. Have I your permission, sir," continued he, addressing Mr. Montague,

"to enter into a detail, which I trust will convince you how unfortunately my brother has been deceived into acting a part so justly offensive to you."

"If such is your desire, sir," said Mr. Montague, speaking with as much calmness as he could assume while under the influence of such powerful emotion, "I can have no objection to listen, though I must say that my feelings on reading a letter, containing such injurious aspersions on my niece's honour, and on the honour of the whole family, can very ill dispose me to any farther investigation of a subject in every way so wounding to my feelings as a man, and to my character as a gentleman."

"Those feelings, sir," said the General, with an expression of the most benignant sweetness, "it is my most earnest desire to sooth by convincing you how lightly such calumny should weigh on your mind when you consider Mrs. Hamilton's despicable motives. Her unfortunate connexion with Miss Montague renders it painful to me to state them ; but as, in every instance where the happiness of others is concerned, no feelings except those of justice ought

to influence us, I will briefly state what I am so anxious you should hear."

Mr. Montague bowed without speaking, and the General resumed—"A short time previous to my nephew's joining his regiment at C——, my brother, in my house, and in my presence, proposed to him to form a connexion with Mrs. Hamilton's eldest daughter. Perfectly ignorant of Mrs. Hamilton's real character, which she had sufficient art to disguise from a man of his careless disposition, he had listened with pleasure to the overtures made by the Hamiltons to that effect.

"To this proposal my nephew gave a decided refusal, declaring he never would marry till he met with a lady whom he could from his own choice select as the partner of his future life. In this refusal my brother readily acquiesced, saying he might consider himself as uncontrolled master of his actions in this respect, as to such freedom of choice his years fully entitled him; and from that period, till the receipt of Mrs. Hamilton's letter, never, I believe, thought farther on the subject.

"To the feelings that letter was but too well

calculated to excite he unfortunately gave way without consulting me, as he thought himself bound in honour to Mrs. Hamilton to conceal it; but he immediately wrote to his son, to apprise him of the step he had taken, and also to Captain Elmore, who he concluded was the friend alluded to in Mrs. Hamilton's letter.

" To carry her schemes more perfectly into effect, Mrs. Hamilton had previously secured in her interest a servant of my brother's, whose care and attention, during his frequent attacks of the gout, had unhappily enabled her to acquire an influence over him. These two letters she suppressed, together with every one addressed by my nephew or Elmore to my brother, concluding, from the knowledge Mrs. Hamilton had imparted to her, of the quick feelings and sensibility of your family, that such a quarrel would take place between you and my nephew as would preclude any farther wish on his part to complete the connexion he was then so desirous to form. If this should not happen, she relied on her own abilities to involve my nephew in such disputes

with his father as would prevent his being enabled to undeceive him ; as my brother, offended at the seeming disrespect of his son and Captain Elmore in never returning any answer to his letters, was violently incensed with both.

" Under such circumstances, sir, you may, perhaps, form some judgment of what my nephew's feelings must have been on receiving your's and Miss Montague's letter. Unable to assign any cause for either, such was the distraction of his mind, that instead of coming to Dublin, as he had intended, for the purpose of arranging his affairs, to enable him to make proper proposals to you, and to obtain your consent to his union with Miss Montague, he yielded himself a prey to despair, and commissioned Captain Elmore to give me a brief state of the affair, such as to him it then appeared, to excuse his not meeting me in town, as he had promised. He made a tour round the kingdom, and afterwards proposed going to Spain ; but before he could effect a proper exchange for himself and friend, as I before mentioned, he accidentally discovered that his father had

written to you. Equally surprised at such a circumstance, and at my brother's never having apprized him of such a step, he set out for my house, where a meeting took place between him and his father, who put into his hands the letter I have shewn you of Mrs. Hamilton's. For that my nephew accounts by supposing it was instigated by resentment to himself for declining a connexion with her daughter; and by excessive jealousy of your niece for being the heiress of a property she was so desirous to secure for her son.

" Such, sir, are the motives which actuated her; and I earnestly hope that this plain, and, I solemnly assure you, correct statement of facts, will incline you to pardon my brother's letter, and restore my nephew to that place he was so happy as to hold in your friendship and esteem previous to this unfortunate transaction. I may now, perhaps, without offence, offer you a letter from my brother, apologizing for the injurious one into which he was betrayed by his confidence in the assertions of a woman whose situation in life, and connexion with your family, precluded her from suspicion, as

with your family differences my brother was, till informed by her own letter, perfectly ignorant. I will then sir, with your permission, propose such terms on the part of my nephew, as will, I earnestly hope, induce you to consent to his union with your niece, and thus reward him for sufferings, which, could you have known, would have induced you to regret the arts that have been used to destroy his happiness and sully his honour by a suspicion of duplicity. That such will now be your feelings, and those of his young friend," added he, looking at Charles, "I cannot doubt from the many strong proofs of friendship and regard you evinced for him when unacquainted with his attachment to Miss Montague, and when unprejudiced judges of his character and conduct."

In every way irritated, disgusted and offended, Mr. Montague could not easily recover from the impression of such complicated feelings; and with cold politeness thanking General Sedley for the honour conferred on his niece, said, "Such a length of time has elapsed since the Major's first proposals to Miss Montague, that I can not suppose

she would now wish to form such a connexion, as she also is fully sensible of the indignity offered her: and, however the explanation you have just given, sir, must remove any resentment I can feel to Mr. Sedley, the past has made too deep an impression on my mind to render such a connexion as pleasant to our feelings as it would once have been; more particularly as the present unsettled state of my niece's affairs might seem to justify Mrs. Hamilton's insinuations, who, not content with the basest efforts to deprive Miss Montague of her fortune, has added the still more unpardonable injury of endeavouring to defame her character, and disgrace her family."

"Is this just? is this equitable?" exclaimed General Sedley: "can you indeed resolve to sacrifice my nephew's happiness to pride? That Miss Montague's feelings must have been severely wounded I will, with sincere regret for the occasion, acknowledge; but, when convinced her resentment was unjustly elicited, she will not, I earnestly hope, feel any objection to suffer my nephew to try and regain the place he once flattered himself he held in her

esteem. To permit him to make this trial is all I request, and a refusal I cannot meet with the same calmness with which I endured your reception of my first attempts to offer an explanation, as I cannot consider it prompted by the same feelings of honourable delicacy that then influenced your conduct. Pardon me, sir, if I have spoken with too much of the plainness of an old soldier, not accustomed to disguise his sentiments ; and suffer me to ask," addressing Charles, " if you have so far forgotten your former friendship for Sedley as to think it just that he should fall the victim of Mrs. Hamilton's artifices ?"

" Since you have asked my opinion, sir," said Charles, " I will frankly declare, that all the resentment has vanished which I have so long borne to Sedley and to your family, for what I considered most injurious treatment of a lady to whom no man's attention could be regarded as an honour that she was not well entitled to receive. This complete explanation Mrs. Hamilton's baseness, shews how unjustly I have been led to accuse Sedley of duplicity, and I shall with plea-

sure meet him on the same terms of friendship I formerly professed and felt for him. At the same time, sir, I must be permitted to say, that, were I to consult my feelings alone, I should infinitely prefer my cousin's forming a connexion with a gentleman, my own particular friend, and a man to whom no family could possibly urge an objection, than to ally herself where even the shadow of disapprobation has been either felt or expressed. Sidney has decidedly rejected this gentleman, probably from affection for Major Sedley, whom she always acquitted of any species of dishonour, much as appearances were against him. She ought therefore to be allowed to act for herself, and to follow her own inclination ; and this concession, sir," addressing his father, " Sidney's uniform affection and deference to your advice I think deserve that you should make to her wishes."

The struggle of wounded pride, with the sense of justice, and affection to Sidney, which dictated this speech, so strongly recommended Charles to the old General's favour, that, holding out his hand, he said with a smile,

“ Much as Otwage interested me by the warmth with which he spoke of the many acts of kindness you had shewn him, and many as were the anecdotes Henry Elmore related of your spirit, generosity, and candour, your present conduct has even more warmly obliged and gratified me than I could have expected ; it has convinced me how truly you deserved the praises they mutually bestowed upon you. You will not then, I hope, refuse my offered friendship ; and, consenting to banish all remembrance of the past, and all recollection of a woman undeserving of notice, receive with your former kindness a friend who feels the most anxious impatience to be restored to your esteem, and allowed in person to declare his feelings.”

No pride, no resentment, could enable Charles longer to withstand the earnest desire which General Sedley manifested to conciliate his friendship, an advance which from him he could not but consider as highly flattering, and, eagerly taking his hand, he declared that he felt most anxious to embrace Sedley, and to assure him of his undiminished friendship.

“ May I, sir,” cried the General, then addressing Mr. Montague, “ from you hope the same generosity? May I entreat that you will sanction your son’s permission to my nephew to renew his visits at your house, leaving the rest to time, and his own influence with Miss Montague ?”

“ I most earnestly entreat you will do so, sir,” cried Charles, eagerly ; “ I think it due to Sidney, and shall ever consider it as an obligation to myself.”

Mr. Montague, unable to resist the wishes of a son who had always so scrupulously studied his, sensible of the justice of his demand, and his pride soothed by the General’s urgency, which proved how warmly interested he felt in the success of his embassy, and not thinking himself justified in sacrificing Sidney’s happiness to his own feelings of disgust, after a few moments’ pause replied by referring the General entirely to Sidney.

General Sedley, delighted by a concession which he knew from his nephew would be followed by the full accomplishment of his wishes, laid aside the slight degree of reserve

that had hitherto marked his manner, and with great animation expressed his delight at the prospect of an union between the two families, saying he had, when in India, been intimately acquainted with, and sincerely esteemed, an uncle of Mr. Montague's, who had been in the same regiment with himself. Mr. Montague, insensibly recovering the warm and cordial politeness which so strikingly distinguished his manners, they conversed more as if they had been old friends than only that morning introduced to each other, till the General said, with a smile, that he must not forget poor Otwage's impatience to learn the result of an interview on which his happiness depended, and would therefore request Mr. Montague's permission to have a few minutes private conversation with Miss Montague, to deliver a message with which his nephew had charged him, if allowed to address her.

Charles leaving the room to prepare Sidney for this unexpected interview, General Sedley, after bestowing such warm encomiums on him as delighted his father, presented a letter from his brother, expressing a hope it would

eradicate all resentment from his breast towards a man, whose character, however shaded by a few errors, had long secured the love and esteem of all who were acquainted with the benevolence of his disposition, and the liberality of his sentiments.

Though Mr. Montague felt no inclination to concur in the General's praises of his brother, he had gone too far to refuse his assent; and, taking the letter, he broke the seal, and read the following lines :

“ To —— MONTAGUE, Esq.

“ SIR,—Though rather at a loss how to address you, after such a letter as I was deceived by Mrs. Hamilton's false representations into writing; yet, as an old man, long since retired from the busy scenes of life, and therefore easily exposed to artful impositions and interested treachery, I cannot but indulge the hope that my brother's explanation will remove the just resentment which you feel towards me for crediting her base assertions. But,

considering her as a friend to myself, and as an impartial observer of her relation, Miss Montague's conduct, I had no reason to suspect their falsehood.

"To my son I leave the task of making my apologies to Miss Montague;—he will, I trust, have sufficient influence to induce her to pardon the past; as I am extremely anxious to be viewed by you and your family in that light, in which, I flatter myself, had I the honour of being personally known to you, I should be considered.

"I shall no longer intrude on your time, sir, than to assure you, that had my health permitted, I would in person have made the apology which my brother has undertaken to offer in my name; and to express a sincere hope that Miss Montague and yourself will honour the proposals of my son with your approbation. As my brother, in consequence of my infirmities, has been obliged to represent me on this occasion, I request you will consider him as vested with full powers to agree in my name to any terms you shall dic-

tate, as best calculated to ensure the happiness
of Miss Montague,

“ I have the honour to be, sir,

“ your most obedient humble servant,

Abbeyville, “ WILLIAM SEDLEY.”
June — 180—.

There was in this letter, though not precisely such as Mr. Montague had expected, something so expressive of an earnest wish to efface every disagreeable recollection, and it so strongly indicated the easy and unsuspecting credulity with which Mr. Sedley had trusted to Mrs. Hamilton, that it more completely subdued his resentment than all the General had urged in his brother's favour. After a short struggle, he therefore expressed his inclination to forget the past, and even declared that he felt extremely desirous to apologise to Major Sedley, for suspecting him of duplicity, and thus exposing him to all the misery he had endured. He concluded by inviting him and the General to spend the evening in Merrion-square, to which the General assented.

Meanwhile Charles proceeded to the drawing-room in search of Sidney, whom he found there alone, waiting for his summons. Much surprised at his long delay, on seeing him enter with a countenance beaming with pleasure, she with great cagerness demanded what had occurred to gratify him so much.

"A circumstance," cried he, affectionately, "that has given me more pleasure than any I ever remember; and, if you promise to listen with patience and composure, I will make you a partner in my joy."

Sidney, astonished at this preamble knew not what to hope or expect; but, giving the required promise, he continued, "Are you not convinced, Sidney, that no circumstance can give me sincerer delight than such as promises to render you happy? and such I have now to communicate.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed she, in violent perturbation; "has the gentleman who came here to-day——?"

She stopped, fearing to betray herself; when Charles, bursting into a laugh, exclaimed, "That was a tolerable good guess, Sidney; so good an one, that I am almost tempted to suspect

you had some little hint of this business. However, to keep you no longer in suspense, he is no other than General Sedley; and he has so fully explained all matters to my father's satisfaction and mine, that you may banish all fears, and prepare to meet the poor Major with all the kindness I know you feel for him."

Sidney, overpowered by intelligence so unexpected and delightful, could not utter a word; and, while tears flowed down her cheeks, she looked at Charles for some farther explanation of what appeared so incredible. Comprehending the meaning of her expressive look, he gave her a brief and rapid sketch of all General Sedley had communicated, and concluded by informing her of his request, and urging her to be expeditious, as the General was anxious to return to his nephew.

This argument, the most powerful one he could use, had the desired effect on Sidney, who soon so far tranquillized her spirits as to be able to accompany him to the study, when Mr. Montague, rising and taking her hand, led her forward, and presented her to the General, who tenderly inquired about her health, of

which, he said, his nephew had requested he would be very particular in his account.

Though not wholly devoid of confusion and agitation, Sidney replied to his inquiries with grace and sweetness.

Mr. Montague and Charles leaving the room, General Sedley took Sidney's hand, and, tenderly pressing it, said, "Suffer me now, my dear Miss Montague, in Otwage's name, to thank you for the honour you have conferred on him by still permitting him to hold that place in your esteem which he was so happy as to attain; and allow me to indulge a hope that the deception practised by Mrs. Hamilton will plead my brother's apology with you for the part he has acted. He is most anxious to obtain your esteem and affection; and do not think me too partial when I assure you, that, if you knew him, you would feel that interest in his favour which he so truly deserves, however unfortunately he has in some instances allowed his understanding to be enslaved."

The General's anxiety to vindicate his brother required no apology with Sidney, from

knowing the early history of both ; and she replied with great sweetness, “ I do not bear Mr. Sedley any resentment—I know from Major Sedley, and from Charles, that he has been deceived ; and, with every sentiment of that respect which I should wish to feel for Major Sedley’s father, I am prepared to meet him.”

“ How infinitely you oblige and delight me !” cried the General warmly : “ How every thing charming and candid that Otwage prepared me to expect you, have I found you ; and with what pleasure will I now hasten to offer him my congratulations ! But, before I leave you, I must deliver the message with which he has charged me—to request, that if Mr. Charles Montague should entertain any suspicions, or make any inquiries respecting the past, you would confide to him all the particulars that have been communicated to you, as he is extremely anxious to be restored to his confidence and esteem. From the friendship that has ever subsisted between you and Mr. Montague, you would perhaps find any reserve with him disagreeable : and such a confidence he cannot doubt that Mr. Montague will hold sacred, as I

believe Otwage would dislike to have any other member of your family acquainted with the state of his private affairs."

Sidney thanked the General with much animation for his and Major Sedley's kind attention to her wishes ; the General then saying with a smile, he feared he had already tried his nephew's patience to the utmost, rung for his carriage, and took his leave.

As soon as he was gone Charles returned to the room, and related at full all the General had mentioned, shewing her Mrs. Hamilton's letter, which he had left with him for that purpose.

Sidney's mortification on reading a letter so injurious to her character for a while suspended the pleasure she had experienced, till, soothed by the recollection how little impression it could have made on General Sedley's mind, when so anxious to promote her union with his nephew ; and fearful of still farther irritating Charles, who expressed the most violent anger against the whole Hamilton family, she sought to draw off his attention from so painful a subject by giving him a cir-

cumstantial detail of her meeting with Sedley at the theatre, and the conversation Sir Townly and Lady Beauchamp's mutual inattention had permitted them to have ; and, producing Sedley's letter, requested he would read, and give her his opinion of it.

With eager attention Charles ran over the elucidation it contained of all that had so much surprised and offended him ; and the moment he had concluded it said, with great warmth, " Sedley is a noble, generous fellow, and truly deserves all the affection you feel for him ; I now sincerely regret the uneasiness he has suffered, and all the injustice I have unintentionally shewn him ; and, though I must consider his father as a very weak man, yet his early conduct to the General would, in my mind, plead his apology for a thousand errors."

Every way delighted with Charles, and at the happy prospect that awaited her, Sidney repeatedly thanked him for his kindness ; saying, it was by Sedley's own desire she had shewn him the letter, which she would otherwise have considered herself bound to withhold ; adding the Major's desire to have his

private family transactions kept secret from all her family except himself.

To observe the strictest secrecy Charles readily promised, much gratified by the mutual anxiety General Sedley and the Major had shewn to obliterate from his mind every feeling of anger. All his gaiety revived by this happy removal of Sidney's uneasiness, and by the pleasure he felt in the conviction of possessing the esteem of two men of whom he had, so high an opinion, he conversed with such lively animation as seemed to Sidney's sanguine imagination the welcome harbinger of future peace and happiness.

On their return to the drawing-room, Mr. and Mrs. Montague, and Anna, affectionately embraced and congratulated Sidney on the explanation that had taken place, and Mr. Montague warmly expressed the pleasure he felt in the happy prospects that awaited so beloved a niece, whose conduct he said fully entitled her to the felicity he hoped she would enjoy. Sidney, perceiving Mrs. Montague's eyes fill with tears at a recollection of the different fate her own daughter's different conduct had in-

curred, hastened from the room to relieve her feelings.

Eager to express her delight at the prospect of the entertainments an union so agreeable to all parties was likely to produce, Anna hurried Sidney to the drawing-room the moment she could with propriety leave the dinner-table, and was with volatile playfulness alternately rallying and congratulating her, when a loud knock at the door called her to the window, from whence, catching a glimpse of Major Sedley in the carriage with his uncle, she instantly retreated, and calling out she would in pity leave her to enjoy a few moments' private conversation with her adorer, hurried from the room.

Scarcely had she quitted it when General Sedley and the Major entered together. Sedley, hastily advancing before his uncle, approached Sidney, and, fervently pressing her hand, exclaimed, "How shall I express my gratitude, for your generous kindness, and for the transport, I feel in being again permitted to see you; a happiness I thought would have been for ever

denied me ! What have I not endured since the last evening I spent at Belle Vue!"

" I too have suffered a great deal," said Sidney, in a low voice, blushing at this address in the presence of the General, who walked towards a window without seeming to observe her ; " but let us," continued she, in an accent of tenderness, " mutually bury the past in oblivion."

" Every thing," cried he, gratefully, " will I bury in oblivion but the remembrance of your tenderness and constancy, which no power but death can efface from my heart."

Confounded at his unrestrained ardour of expression before his uncle, Sidney withdrew her hand, and, turning from him, went forward to address the General, who relieved her confusion by the kindness of his manner, and the delicacy with which he avoided any allusion to the past.

Mr. Montague and Charles entering the room together, the former advanced to Major Sedley, whose cheeks the sight of both had tinged with the deepest scarlet, and, holding

out his hand, said, “ I am most happy Major Sedley, to meet you again as a friend, and sincerely sorry for any pain I may have occasioned you ; but you are a man of too much honour not to feel and acknowledge the propriety of my conduct.” .

“ I do feel and acknowledge the propriety of your conduct, sir,” cried the Major, eagerly taking his offered hand ; “ and whatever unhappiness I have felt, to you or your family I can attach no blame, though I must ever blush at a recollection of the offence you have, however undesignedly, received from mine.”

Mr. Montague, gratified by his manly candour, affectionately pressed his hand, and Charles exclaimed with great warmth, “ I cannot, my dear Sedley, describe my regret for the unfortunate misunderstanding that has so long subsisted between us, nor the shame I feel for having so unjustly suspected you : all the apology I can offer is with truth to assure you, that, wherever I thought your conduct could be vindicated, I have uniformly done you justice : in short I cannot express the unbounded pleasure I feel at this renewal of our friendship.”

"Never," cried Sedley, with enthusiasm, "can I forget the generous friendship you have on so many occasions shewn me; but more particularly for your conduct of this morning, which my uncle faithfully has related; nor can I retain a moment's resentment for suspicions which were far from being unfounded,—conscious how much I was myself the dupe of appearances; and hereafter," continued he, lowering his voice to a whisper, "will I consider you as a brother."

Mrs. Montague and Anna coming into the room, a general and animated conversation took place, Charles's lively spirits completely succeeded in banishing every painful feeling of confusion, which Sidney and Major Sedley had mutually experienced. The exquisite happiness that she now felt, tinging her cheeks with the softest bloom, and irradiating her eyes and countenance with more than common brilliancy, she looked so unusually lovely, that General Sedley frequently gazed at her with admiration, and at his nephew with an expression of the most affectionate congratulation. He felt no longer surprised that he should have so bitterly

lamented that such a woman could have cruelly and deliberately made him the sport of her vanity.

The ecstacy Sedley experienced in this full accomplishment of his wishes, this perfect conviction that neither time nor imaginary insult had robbed him of that affection which Sidney had so frankly avowed on his first proposing for her, more than atoned for all the soul-harrowing suspicious and cruel conflicts he had so long endured ; and scarcely could he so far tranquillize his feelings as to join in conversation. He hung on her every look and word with enraptured attention, while the sparkling lustre of his eyes, and vivid brightness of his colour, so greatly heightened the beauty of his manly countenance, that Anna could not forbear whispering to Sidney, she really never had thought the Major half so handsome, nor could she now wonder at her constancy.

Charles at length recollecting Captain Elmore, whom the flurry of his mind at this unexpected turn in Sidney's affairs had hitherto driven from his remembrance, asked Sedley if he was in town, or where he lived, as he was

very anxious that he should share the general happiness.

"He is in town," replied he, "and will for the present reside with my uncle and myself at the hotel."

"Will you then," said Charles, "tell him I shall be extremely obliged to him to meet me to-morrow morning, when I intend to do myself the honour of breakfasting with you and the General. You know," continued he, laughing, "I have some little punctilioes to settle with him also, though I am sure he is too good a fellow to bear me resentment." —

"He bears none, I assure you," replied Sedley, "and by this kind attention to him you will double the obligation conferred on me."

As the General was much fatigued with the rapidity with which he had travelled to town, he ordered his carriage early, consenting, at Mr. Montague's request, to spend the following day with the Major in Merrion-square. Mr. Montague then recollecting Captain Elmore, told Sedley that he would wait on him in the course of the day, in order to request his company also. .

“ I will undertake that office for you, sir,” cried Charles; “ I have invited myself to breakfast to-morrow with you, General, for the purpose of meeting Elmore.”

“ You will give me a great deal of pleasure by coming,” replied the General, “ as I am very anxious to enjoy as much of your time as you can spare during my residence in town; and if you, Mr. Montague, will be so good as to accompany your son, you will infinitely oblige me.”

Mr. Montague assented, Charles eagerly declaring there were no friends with whom he could spend his time that would give him half so much pleasure.

The prepossession which the whole family had felt in favour of General Sedley, his visit of the evening had confirmed; as, to great intelligence and abilities, he added an extensive knowledge of the world; and to the most pleasing affability of manners, he joined an engaging mildness, with which severe misfortune had tempered the strength of his early passions and feelings.

CHAP. XII.

As Major Sedley had expressed an earnest wish to have some private conversation with Sidney, she declined accompanying Mrs. Montague and Anna in their morning's drive.

As soon as they were gone, the Major, after dwelling with great energy on the anxiety he had suffered during his absence from Dublin, entreated she would gratify him with a detail of what had taken place at Belle Vue on the receipt of his father's letter, and all that had since occurred to interest her feelings.

With this request Sidney complied, candidly avowing the shock the letter had given her : she was proceeding to mention her reluctance to reply to his own letter in the harsh terms her uncle had prescribed, when Sedley, interrupting her, said, "Why did you shew it to your uncle? Surely you could not possibly have doubted my assertion, that

I was ignorant of any reason for Mr. Montague's to me : why then hesitate to write, and relieve me from the tortures I endured?"

" And may I not with more justice ask," said Sidney, " why you so unguardedly sent such a letter by your own servant? It was given to me at breakfast, and, as my uncle recognised your writing, I could not refuse to shew it, nor avoid replying in the terms he directed; though, had I been permitted to follow my own inclination, I should have given the information you desired."

" Such was the distraction of my mind, at the moment," replied he, " that no thought of the probable consequences occurred to me; and, enraged beyond endurance at the charge of having formed clandestine designs, I sent my letter publicly by my servant, without reflecting that you were not at liberty to act as you pleased ; but why not afterwards send me even a single line to say you had been compelled to write the harsh answer I received?"

" Reflect for a moment," said Sidney, " on the insinuations, and charges, your father's letter conveyed ; and then say, if I should not, by

taking such a step, have justified in some degree the accusation?"

"Pardon me," said Sedley, colouring, "I forgot the vile insinuation, or I should not have asked such a question; but may I not hope you will try to forgive my father? His conduct I cannot justify; yet to you it was not designedly offensive, and every atonement in his power he is unaffectedly anxious to make."

"He has already made such an ample one," said Sidney, "that I not only forgive, I feel inclined to love him."

With impassioned fervour Sedley thanked her for this declaration; and she then, at his request, continued her relation, touching very slightly on her uncle's wish of her marrying Mr. Ingram, and entirely omitting his suspicions of Charles's attachment to her, though dwelling with great warmth on the kindness Charles had shewn her. She suppressed all mention of Mr. Savage's proposals, thinking herself bound in honour to conceal a circumstance which he would now consider as wounding to his pride, and deeming it the least attention she could pay to his feelings in return

for his generosity, and the good nature he had many occasions shewn her.

Delighted with the frank avowal of her feelings, Sedley poured forth the most rapturous thanks, and then asked if she would wish to hear a more accurate detail of the explanation that had taken place between him and his father than she had yet learned.

" You will gratify me extremely by relating it," replied Sidney, " as all I have distinctly understood was the cruel letter Mrs. Hamilton wrote to your father."

" To give you this relation," cried he, " I feel very desirous: it will, I trust, in some degree justify my father's conduct; and such has been his late kindness to me, that, though always more inclined to sorrow than anger for what I considered so public a disgrace to his character, all my early affection for him has been strongly revived; and I feel the most eager anxiety to impress you with favourable sentiments towards him."

Sidney replied that with such his letter had already impressed her. Major Sedley continued: " The morning after my arrival at my

uncle's, he sent off a servant to Sedley-Park, to request that my father would immediately come to Abbeyville. The servant returned in a few hours with an answer that my father was not well, as he felt many flying symptoms of the gout ; but, if able to travel, he would come on the following week. He also conveyed a hint that if my uncle's business was such as required despatch, he had better proceed to the Park.

" I was thus compelled to wait my father's pleasure ; and, relieved from the apprehensions I suffered about your health, by a letter from Mrs. Enesy, I endeavoured to beguile my uneasiness by settling with my uncle all the preparatory steps I had before resolved to take, and in which he generously prevented my wishes. Day after day, however, passed, and still my father did not make his appearance. As illness I knew did not detain him, I begged of my uncle to let us at once set out for the Park ; but as there were many disagreeable ideas associated with Sedley-Park, particularly where marriage was the subject of debate, and as he dreaded the scenes that might there ensue in the soured and perverse state to which my

temper had been reduced, he refused, but again wrote to my father, requesting in the most earnest terms to see him, and declaring that, if he refused compliance, he must consider it as a failure, though the only one, of the friendship he had ever borne him.

"To this letter my father replied in person, and coming abruptly into the room where my uncle, Elmore, and myself were sitting after dinner, he addressed my uncle without deigning the smallest attention to our joint salutations.

Though surprised by this treatment, because I believed he considered me still ignorant of his letter to Mr. Montague, I returned to my seat in silence, too angry to venture to speak, and desirous to leave the matter to my uncle's management; but Elmore, astonished at such a reception, instantly demanded in what he had offended him.

"My father angrily replied, that when gentlemen thought proper to shew such disrespect to him, as to neglect answering his letters, he thought an apology was much more due to him than a demand of such a nature.

"Elmore, still more astonished by such a charge, protested he had not for months received a line from him, though he himself had repeatedly written, adding that he was incapable of treating him with such disrespect.

"'Do you mean to deny sir,' cried my father, 'that I wrote to you at the time that gentleman,' pointing to me, 'thought proper to play the fool with Mr. Montague's artful niece, and expose himself to the derision of his whole regiment? I find your sober fools are always the greatest; ten thousand giddy fellows would have laughed at such shallow artifices as I find duped him, who, I thought, might have been implicitly trusted. Had my letter any effect on you, sir,' continued he turning to me? 'or was Mr. Montague ashamed or afraid to go farther after the letter I wrote to him?'

"The indignation I should at any other moment have felt was lost in astonishment at hearing my father not only openly avow a letter which I thought he had taken such pains to conceal, but at his thus charging Elmore and myself with denying the receipt of letters which had never reached us; and I merely joined

Elmore in absolute denial of ever having received a line from him on such a subject.

My father, in turn surprised, insisted we should pledge our honours of the truth of what we asserted. As Elmore did so, I followed his example, when my father, recovering his good humour, asked me, with a laugh, how I had contrived to break through the snares that had been laid to catch me? had his letter to Mr. Montague assisted me, or had that, like the others he had written on the subject, vanished into air?

Here my uncle interposed, and said, with great warmth, that he was extremely concerned to state it had not; and asked my father how he could have offered such an insult to a man of his known and scrupulous pride.

"What does all this mean, George?" exclaimed my father! "do you speak from your own personal knowledge, or from the report of these foolish boys?"

My uncle replied, that he had, when in India, been intimately acquainted with, and experienced many acts of kindness and friendship from, an uncle of Mr. Montague's,

of whom he spoke in the highest terms ; and with the characters of the family in general he said he was well acquainted through the medium of his niece, Charlotte Enesy, and her husband, who lived very near them, as well as from many others, who all concurred in representing them as a family equally honourable and respectable from their birth and conduct ; and concluded by asking my father who had given him such false information, or induced him to act such a part ?

Astonished at this declaration, my father replied, that, if he did not consider himself in some degree bound in honour to silence, he would mention the person ; but, on my uncle's warmly declaring honour must demand his public avowal of the name of the person who could have uttered such an infamous slander, unless he had solemnly pledged himself to observe secrecy, my father replied, he had not ; and, with what surprise to me, to Elmore, and to my uncle, you may suppose, named Mrs. Hamilton as the lady who had given him the information ; and, producing her letter, which he said he had then in his pocket, to

convince my uncle he had not treated me unkindly in endeavouring to prevent such a marriage, he put it into my hand, desiring me to read it, and say whether or not it justified that which he had written to Mr. Montague; or how I could account for Miss Montague's aunt giving such a character of her and her family.

The moment I read it I saw at once through Mrs. Hamilton's motives; and, feeling all resentment to my father subside, I assured him that she was evidently instigated by resentment to me for having declined a union with her daughter; and by a similar feeling to you for being the undoubted heiress of a property which she had, I understood from the best authority, endeavoured to wrest from you. Elmore having also read the letter, declared it contained the most infamous falsehoods, particularly dwelling on that part where she said I had been near engaging in a duel with one of my brother officers on the subject, solemnly assuring him no such circumstance had ever taken place.

The recollection of how very near quarrelling

French and I had been at the time of my mistake about the picture occurring to me, and finding how artfully truth and falsehood had been mingled, I requested Elmore to be silent, and then, obtaining my father's permission, I related without disguise every circumstance that had taken place between us, putting into his hand the letter I had received from you and Mr. Montague, as did Elmore Charles Montague's to himself.

There is a something in truth, that, as I dare say you have a thousand times read and heard, no falsehood can assume ; and my father, no less enraged than ashamed at having been so completely duped by Mrs. Hamilton, vehemently expressed his indignation.

My uncle, delighted at this conclusion of an affair which his dislike of offending my father had made him feel averse to engage in, though affection to me, and sympathy in my feelings, forbade his refusal, expressed his joy at this detection of Mrs. Hamilton, adding, that since he must be now perfectly convinced of the falsehood of her assertions, no farther barrier remained in the way of my happiness.

. My father replied that he had no intention of withdrawing the uncontrolled power with which he had formerly invested me ; though he could not with patience think of a young man of my time of life, and with the understanding he considered me to possess, acting so silly a part as he had been led to suppose ; and that, had he not thought himself called on to preserve me from ruin, he never would have interceded, farther than to remind me of the terms on which alone he could increase my income on marriage.

Delighted at this generosity, though such as I had always expected from my father, I eagerly thanked him, and then putting your picture into his hand, asked him, as Charles Montague did to me on a former occasion, how he approved my choice ? His answer was such as I had foreseen,—high encomiums on your beauty, intermingled with infinite approbation of my having won the heart of so fine a woman ; but advising me to take care that I was not deceived. Taking advantage of his good humour, I requested him to write a letter of apology to Mr. Montague, which I feared his pride

would have induced him to refuse, from being ashamed to confess how grossly he had suffered himself to be imposed on ; for though he waved all mention of the subject, nor did I make inquiries which I knew must be disagreeable, I did suspect who the person was who had suppressed his letters to Elmore and myself. I have since discovered that Mrs. Hamilton bribed her to do so, through the medium of her own maid, who is the unhappy woman's sister, and whom she despatched to the country for the express purpose. She had therefore aided her machinations with great ingenuity, and used every means she could suggest to detain my father at the Park, till my uncle's last letter determined him to come off the moment he had read it.

My father for some time refused to comply with my entreaties, but, at length overpowered by Elmore's half-laughing, half-serious arguments, he consented, saying he would send Mrs. Hamilton's letter to convince him that the insult he had received had been in fact offered by a connexion of his own family, and not by him; but charging me repeatedly

to vindicate his conduct to you, as he felt infinitely more anxious for your good opinion than that of any other member of your family. He generously added, that till your fortune was recovered, he would not insist on the money he had demanded ; and that, when he had any to command, he should feel pleasure in assisting me to punish Mrs. Hamilton, by compelling her to restore the property she so unjustly withheld, and which must have been the real motive to the baseness she had practised. To this proposal my uncle would not consent ; but all other matters were finally arranged before we left the country.

Sedley then briefly mentioning the state of his affairs, declared 800*l.* per annum was all he could, for the present, call his own. With impassioned eagerness he requested permission to have every preliminary arranged for their immediate union, as, after the disappointment he had already suffered, he never could feel at ease till the ceremony that would finally secure his happiness had been performed ; and concluded by saying, that, when he had that morning spoken to Mr. Montague on the subject,

he had referred him to her, assuring him that by her wishes he would be entirely guided.

Generous, frank, and affectionate in her disposition, and educated to despise all the petty arts of coquetry and affectation, Sidney, with blushing grace, acceded to the permission so ardently desired, declaring that, though taught to estimate the full value of independence by the mortifications to which the embarrassed state of her affairs had exposed her, yet a competence was all she desired, and that to share with him even the most moderate fortune she should consider a blessing superior to any other she could enjoy. How then could she feel sufficiently grateful to Heaven for granting her such felicity, accompanied by the prospect of future wealth beyond her wishes?

Sedley's transports at hearing this avowal he could not find language to convey; he could only declare himself more than recompensed for all he had endured in this full conviction that he had been so blessed as to secure the affections of one whose heart was of more value, and whose esteem was of more import-

ance to him than any other blessing the world could offer.

With mutual pleasure they continued to talk over their affairs and future plans till Mrs. Montague's return, soon after which Major Sedley took his leave.

As soon as he was gone, Mrs. Montague, who appeared in very low spirits, requested to speak to Sidney in private. After apologizing for calling off her attention at such a time from her own affairs, she informed her she had that morning heard a report that Sir Townly and Lady Beauchamp proposed going to England in the course of a few days ; and, as, however Fanny had offended her, she could not cease to consider her as her child, this intelligence had seriously distressed her. Feeling a dread she could not conquer of her leaving Ireland under Sir Townly's protection, she requested Sidney would ask Major Sedley to pay Lady Beauchamp a visit, and, if possible, discover how far she approved of the measure ; adding, that, as the Major was so soon to be allied to Lady Beauchamp's family, she hoped he would have no objection to visit her, for she disliked

to write to Fanny till certain of the truth of the intelligence, or how she might consider such a picce of attention.

With Mrs. Montague's wishes Sidney promised compliance, saying she was well convinced Major Sedley would, with pleasure, undertake the commission.

Returning to the drawing-room, and finding it empty, she sat down to finish a letter she had begun in the morning to Mrs. Enesy, giving her a full statement of all that had occurred within the last few days.

Scarcely had she finished writing, when General and Major Sedley entered the room together ; the General, advancing towards her, exclaimed, " I can no longer deny myself the pleasure of expressing the happiness I feel at the prospect of my dear Otwage's felicity," then, taking her hand, tenderly added, " Will you permit me to join your hands, and in his father's name pronounce a blessing on your future union."

Sidney, blushing excessively at this unexpected address, endeavoured to thank him ; and, making no opposition to his wishes, he

put her hand into the Major's, and with great fervour pronounced a blessing in Mr. Sedley's name and his own, earnestly imploring that Heaven might bestow on both every happiness this world could afford ; when his countenance suddenly changing to an expression of agonized sorrow, he turned to Sedley, and said, with great emotion, " Never, oh never may you experience the misery that I have ; but no,—" added he, rather wildly, " you can never feel what I have felt,—for not on your union, as on mine, will a father's curse rest ; nor will a cruel parent's malediction overtake you in the very eve of life, and render you a wretch like me."

• Shocked and dismayed by his looks and words, Sidney involuntarily withdrew her hand from the Major, and turned away in silence to conceal her emotion ; while the Major exclaimed, " Why, my dearest uncle, do you thus cruelly harrow up your own feelings, and torture mine, by giving way to such recollections ? In pity to yourself, to my father, to all who love you, endeavour to banish the past from your remembrance."

"Never," cried General Sedley, in violent agitation, "never can I banish the past from my recollection, never forget that a father's cruelty doomed my youth to sorrow, and even to my latest hour pursued me with unrelenting vengeance!—Oh Otwage, the curse he denounced against me, which, cruelly inexorable to all your father's supplicating entreaties, unmoved by all my mother's tears and prayers, he refused to retract, at length overtook me in my child; my darling William fell the victim of his grandfather's unnatural denunciation, and with his innocent life paid the forfeit of any disobedience; and, had it not been for your father, I should have past my days a wretched, indigent, wandering exile, unknown, unclaimed, and uncared for;—yet his child will talk to me of gratitude."

The General abruptly ceased, overpowered by the strength of his feelings, and walked towards a window in silence; the Major following Sidney, who had retired to the other end of the room, anxious to conceal the emotion she found herself unable to restrain, tenderly exclaimed, "Do not suffer this cruel

scene thus to affect you ; my uncle is subject to these sudden starts of despair when any circumstance occurs that recalls his early and unmerited sufferings, and in this state of mind always imputes the loss of his son to the cruel malediction my grandfather pronounced against him. I have often before seen him thus, particularly on his first return to the kingdom, and, after spending hours vainly trying to soothe him, have been obliged to yield up the effort as hopeless, and leave him to himself, which from experience I now know is the only relief that can be afforded him, as the less those around him seem to observe his feelings, the sooner he recovers his composure."

However moved by a scene for which she had been unprepared, Sidney's anxiety to oblige Sedley enabled her, in a few moments, to subdue her feelings ; and just then Charles Montague and Captain Elinore entered the room together, when the latter, advancing to Sidney, with the most affectionate cordiality expressed his satisfaction at seeing her so perfectly recovered, not even by a look betraying any remembrance of the past.

The gratitude Sidney felt for his conduct to Major Sedley, and her pleasure at seeing him, she did not disguise ; and, holding out her hand, with animation and sweetness, she declared how highly she valued such a friend.

A reception that so perfectly convinced Captain Elmore that the chosen wife of his friend was all that even his unimpassioned judgment could pronounce amiable, and formed to render him happy, gave him a degree of pleasure that tinged his cheeks with the glow of unfeigned delight ; and Sidney on catching the Major's eye, who had involuntarily watched her reception of Elmore, perceived him smile with a tenderness of approbation that conveyed a sensation of the purest felicity to her own breast.

General Sedley, whom a sight of Charles Montague had restored to the usual command of his feelings, now entering into conversation with him, the Major advanced to Sidney, and with great warmth thanked her for her compliance with his wishes.

" You owe me no thanks," said Sidney, comprehending his meaning, " I have merely followed the impulse of my feelings ; for Cap-

tain Elmore I entertain the esteem and regard which his kind and affectionate conduct to you must ever command from me."

"This kindness and generosity," cried Elmore, with great animation, "though such as I was prepared to meet, merely serves to increase my regret for suffering myself to become the dupe of appearances : yet, such was the situation of all the parties concerned, it would be difficult even now to say what steps I could have taken, after receiving Montague's letter, that could have tended towards an amicable explanation. After reading such a letter, I could as little have commanded my temper as he could, at the moment, have commanded ~~his~~; and the situation of Sedley's mind too completely occupied my thoughts to allow me to deliberate very coolly on the subject: to you I need offer no other apology for my conduct; to such a heart as yours my friendship to him will prove the amplest justification: yet, that after once knowing you, I could have been deceived strikes me with fresh wonder each time I behold you, or hear such sentiments from your lips as convince me how peculiarly blessed

will be the lot of my friend ; yet, anxious as I feel to acquire your esteem, and to be considered by you in the light of a brother to Otwage, for such I am in heart though not in blood, yet I cannot suffer you to remain in the error into which he has designedly led you, of believing that I owed him no gratitude, and that every exertion of friendship and attention on my part was not a just tribute paid to the uniform affection and zealous services of his whole life."

"Henry," interrupted Sedley, "we will wave the subject ; gratitude is a word that never should be used between us, have we either done more than mutually to obey my mother's dying injunctions ?"

"I earnestly hope we have obeyed her," cried Elmore with emotion, "and neither in this instance, nor any other, forgotten the solemn charge she gave alike to each ; but never can I suffer Miss Montague to believe that by me alone was the charge remembered, or the injunction obeyed, when to your active and indefatigable friendship do I owe the present rank I hold ; and that, neglecting every claim for

yourself, you have invariably directed the whole interest of your family to secure my promotion, without allowing me to infringe on my patrimonial inheritance. Nor was this all; when abroad and suffering under severe wounds, could I in any instance have shewn you more unremitting tenderness than you have paid me? and even at this moment, with your whole heart and thoughts occupied as they are, are you not endeavouring to procure me a lucrative appointment through the interest of your uncle? I feel no shame, Otwage, at avowing my obligations; I consider you but as my elder brother, and with the same feelings accept of your services, your assistance, and your friendship, as I should of his."

The entrance of Mrs. Montague and Anna here put an end to this conversation.

As General Sedley felt peculiar pleasure in Charles Montague's society, from strongly reminding him of his own son, who had been of the same lively disposition, his animation, for the moment banished every painful remembrance, and soon mingling in the conversation of the young men, he shewed a degree of

sprightly wit, that, while it delighted those unacquainted with his story, gave to Major Sedley and Captain Elmore an involuntary sensation of grief that such talents should, so often be obscured by the recollection of parental injustice, and the almost superstitious belief of its effects.

In the course of the evening, Sidney found an opportunity of mentioning Mrs. Montague's request to the Major, giving a hasty sketch of the transactions that had occasioned such a quarrel between Lady Beauchamp and her family, in order to account for the necessity of such an application.

The Major, but little surprised at this information, from his knowledge of Sir Towny's character, said he would wait on her ladyship in the morning, and, immediately communicate the result of his visit.

CHAP. XIII.

THE next day Sidney had a long and confidential conversation with Charles on the subject of Major Sedley's proposals, entreating that he would mention them to her uncle, and also her own perfect approbation of them.

Charles assented, saying, that General Sedley being very urgent with Mr. Montague to enter on the preliminaries, as he proposed staying in town till after the marriage had taken place, his father intended to speak to her that day on the subject, for he meant to be guided by her wishes ; " but as you have," continued he laughing, " preferred stating them to me, I will save your blushes by taking upon me the commission. Since to the present contracted state of Sedley's income you are indifferent, no other person has any right to offer an objection ; and as I feel most anxious to be allied to his family, I will now as strenuously endeavour to

promote his wishes as I formerly endeavoured to defeat them."

Some time after Charles was gone, Major Sedley entered the room; and after telling her that he had just quitted Mr. Montague and Charles, who were going to wait on the General, in consequence of her message to her uncle, he asked if Mrs. Montague was in the house, as he had just come from Lady Beauchamp's.

Sidney replying, that, Mrs. Montague had been obliged to go out, but had requested he would mention to her what he had learned; Sedley said, with a smile, "To you I will relate all that passed, though to Mrs. Montague I should have merely stated the only part in which she could feel interested. How totally unlike Lady Beauchamp is to the rest of her family!"

"She is indeed," said Sidney, "very unlike them all; but I hope she has not said anything disagreeable to you."

"No, not now," said Sedley laughing, "as I feel inclined to defy the malice of Fortune; though, could such an interview have taken

place between us a few months back, it might have awakened some bitter feelings."

Sidney, much surprised, expressed her impatience to hear what had passed, and he resumed: "On inquiring if Lady Beauchamp was at home, I was answered in the affirmative, and shewn into a drawing-room, where, after waiting for some time, the servant returned with an answer, that his lady was so much engaged she could not see me; adding, by way of excuse, that his master and mistress were to sail for England that night. This information redoubling my anxiety to see her, and, if possible, learn her sentiments on her intended journey, I called for pen and ink, and wrote a note requesting she would allow me a few moments' conversation with her on particular business. To this note the servant returned with a message, that, though his lady was very particularly engaged, she would see me. After waiting a considerable time, she made her appearance, when, scarcely giving me time to address her, she abruptly exclaimed, 'I am so much hurried, Major Sedley, I cannot possibly wait a moment; nor, even if I could, would I

in the slightest manner interfere in your affairs. It is not an attention either you or Sidney deserve from me; nor would Sir Townly at all approve my acting such a part, if I were inclined to do so, which I assure you I am not, as I consider both you and Sidney have made a very ungrateful return for all my papa's kindness by still carrying on a clandestine correspondence, after what passed at Belle Vue; and I wonder you could think of troubling me on such a subject, particularly at such a time, and after my servant's telling you how much I was engaged.' "

" Neither very much surprised nor offended by this speech, I begged leave to undeceive her respecting the purport of my visit, assuring her that no personal motives had dictated it, as with your conduct, and that of your family, I was perfectly satisfied. On hearing this, Lady Beauchamp's manner changed, and, with some politeness, she desired to be informed of what I wished to communicate. As delicately as I could, I gave her to understand that I was acquainted with the misunderstanding that subsisted between her and her family, and had

come at Mrs. Montague's request to learn if the report of her intending to go to England was true, as it had given her much uneasiness. This information convinced Lady Beauchamp some explanation must have taken place, but instead of replying, she demanded when I had seen her mother, or why she had given me such a communication?

"I then told her, that, as I soon hoped to be allied to her family, I trusted she would consider me as a friend, and candidly tell me if she wished to see her mother previous to her going to England. She hesitated for some time, animadverting with great severity on the conduct of all her family; but at length said, that, though her mother had very strangely neglected her, she should feel happy to see her before she sailed, if she would pay her a visit at her own house; but to her father's she could not go, as Sir Townly would be much offended with her for doing so, nor did she herself wish it. I thought I could discern not only fear of Sir Townly, amidst all her declarations of resentment to her own friends, but pleasure in going to England, to be introduced, as she

said to the first circles. How far she approves the plan, I cannot venture to say ; though that she wishes to see her mother I believe I may with certainty affirm. As I was leaving the room, Sir Townly entered ; and, without honouring me with the slightest notice, asked Lady Beauchamp if she would be ready by ten o'clock, as they must be at the Pigeon-house by that hour : she replied in the affirmative, and then introduced us to each other, when, carelessly returning my salutation, he rather cavalierly said, he believed I was the gentleman who had paid such particular attention to Miss Montague on the night she had been taken ill at the theatre ; adding, with a sneer that, he hoped my attention had been duly rewarded, though he had not yet heard of the elopement.

“ Convinced by this that my name had at once told my story to Sir Townly, I rather angrily demanded what he meant, as I did not understand his allusion. ‘ Is the quarrel made up, then,’ cried he, laughing, ‘ and all matters to be concluded in the honourable way ? Faith, Major, I thought you a man of more spirit ! However, I give you joy, as Miss Montague is

really a monstrous fine girl, though rather too demure for me ; but she seems gentle, and not inclined to interfere in what does not concern her, and that is the best praise can be given to any woman.'"

" Disdaining to notice such impertinence, I took my leave, with a feeling of regret, at seeing one of a family I so sincerely esteem thus thrown into the power of a man whose character is notoriously infamous. When our regiment was quartered in London for a few weeks, previous to our return to Ireland from the Continent, I have heard him spoken of as a man devoid of the feelings or principles of a gentleman. How Mr. Montague could consent to his daughter so marrying him surprises me beyond measure ; but he was, I suppose, ignorant of his character. I wish, for his sake, and indeed for Lady Beauchamp's, that I had been placed in the same happy situation a few months ago that I am now, and I should have undeceived both ; as not an officer of our regiment would consent to be introduced to him, though some were on habits of the closest intimacy with his Irish friends."

"Is this possible?" exclaimed Sidney, much shocked: "wretchedly as I always knew Fanny had thrown hersclf away, I did not think his character had been so completely lost in the eyes of the world: no wonder Charles should have felt and expressed such indignation at the marriage."

"To undeceive him now," cried Sedley, "would answer no good purpose, nor will I ever give him a hint on the subject; but, if Mrs. Montague could induce her daughter to remain in Ireland, believe me it would be prudent. Sir Townly's English friends are a race of people of whom she has no idea."

"I could not venture to give my aunt such a hint," said Sidney. "Fanny, with sorrow I am compelled to say, will now, as she has always done, act what part she pleases: had she listened to my aunt's, to my uncle's, or to Charles's advice, she would not now be Sir Townly Beau-champ's wife; and, after all my aunt has suffered, it would be cruel to give her such needless sorrow as any hint of the kind must occasion."

"You know all past transactions better than

I do," said Major Sedley, " and are therefore much better enabled to judge how you ought to act. If Lady Beauchamp was so perversely determined on her own misery, her friends may lament, but cannot assist her ; and perhaps the splendid fortune she brought Sir Townly may enable him to appear in London to more advantage than at the time to which I allude."

Changing the subject, he continued to talk of their own affairs till Mrs. Montague's return, when he briefly informed her of Fanny's wish to see her previous to her departure, and hinting that, if Lady Beauchamp disapproved of leaving Ireland, he thought it better for her to decline accompanying Sir Townly, who might then be more easily induced to return to his own estate, which would be more likely to render her happy than living in England, separated from all her friends.

Mrs. Montague earnestly thanked him for his kindness; " but oh, Major Sedley," continued she, " you know not how totally Fanny has sacrificed her family to her infatuation for Sir Townly : she did so even before she was married, and now seems to have no wish or

will but his ; and, after the unfortunate quarrel that has taken place between Mr. Montague and Sir Townly, I could not even ask her to remain in Ireland. She is his wife, and certainly ought not to leave him : whatever are my feelings, therefore, I could not make such a proposal, much as I feel obliged by the kindness that has induced you to give me this advice ; nor would Fanny, alas ! be guided by my wishes ; but I will certainly go to visit her this evening, since she wishes to see me previous to her departure."

Unwilling to press his advice, from a dread of unnecessarily alarming Mrs. Montague, when unable to prevent the evils he apprehended, Major Sedley merely replied by offering to attend her to Sir Townly's in the evening, and then took his leave.

A short time before dinner he returned, accompanied by Captain Elmore and Charles, who informed his mother that General Sedley and his father had agreed to dine and spend the day together ; then, joining Sidney, he told her in a whisper that all matters had been arranged, " so now," continued he with a laugh,

“you may, as soon as you please, put all the milliners and mantua-makers in requisition, as my father and the old General have already pressed the lawyers and attorneys into the service, and then a long farewell to all your greatness, a final adieu to love and admiration, and heigh-ho for all the pains and penalties of the married life ! Ogh, ogh ! as my countrymen say, that people can’t know when they are well, that they can’t follow my example, and enjoy the pleasures of life, without troubling themselves with the torments of it ! But I suppose that my day will come yet, and that Cupid will no more spare me than he has done wiser folks ; however, I have one comfort, that, unless he is a good flying shot, he will never catch me, as I never intend to set methodically about falling in love, at least not this twenty or thirty years to come, when, like my friend Ingram, I shall be morally certain that my fine house and good acres will smooth every wrinkle that time and care may have planted in my physiognomy, and that I may, with full confidence of success, take aim at any girl young enough to be my grand-daughter.”

“ My dear Charles,” cried Sidney, “ let me entreat you to forbear this raillery : do add this favour to all the other kindness you have shewn me.”

“ That would be too much to expect,” cried he, gaily, “ I am quite tired of being serious ; so you and the Major shall now pay the full penalty of my long forbearance.”

“ I will pay the penalty with pleasure,” said Major Sedley, and “ retort without mercy when you give me the power.”

“ Yes, and welcome,” replied he ; “ but I can tell you, my dear sir, you will not soon have that happiness ; you, and I,” continued he, addressing Elmore, “ are not yet weary of the pleasures of a bachelor’s life ; we shall, I hope, preserve our liberty, and laugh at the slaves of the ring for many years to come.”

“ I cannot promise you that,” cried Elmore ; “ nothing so powerful as example ; and I shall now feel so completely out of my element, that I think it not improbable I may fall in love for want of something to do.”

“ Most wisely and magnanimously resolved, indeed,” cried Charles : “ idleness we may then

truly pronounce the bane of the human species ; but, while you can keep free from shackles, let me advise you to do so, and assist me in laughing at those who have not been so fortunate."

Ever ready to promote mirth, Elmore willingly joined in Charles's raillery ; and Sidney felt much pleased when a summons to dinner compelled them to silence, though the Major had parried their attacks with equal dexterity and good humour.

Soon after the ladies had returned to the drawing-room, they were followed by Major Sedley, for the purpose of escorting Mrs. Montague to Lady Beauchamp's, whither Anna also accompanied her ; but Sidney remained at home, well aware that Lady Beauchamp would derive no pleasure from her society.

As Sir Townly lived on the other side of the square, Sedley soon returned, and, taking a seat beside Sidney, gave her a more circumstantial detail than Charles had done of the settlement between Mr. Montague and his uncle. He dwelt with great warmth on the kindness with which Mr. Montague had treated him, who declared that, so far from feeling any reluctance to their

immediate union, from the present contracted state of his income, he would not make an objection even were it always to continue the same, adding that the marriage of his own daughter had fully convinced him of the folly of centering either happiness or respectability in wealth alone. He then said, that, as his uncle was determined to remain with him till after his marriage, he hoped she would have no objection to name the earliest day possible for the nuptials, and then accompany him to his uncle's, where his father and sisters would come to meet her, together with the General's daughters, as he felt anxious to introduce her to his family, of whom she might naturally have formed an opinion very different from what he trusted she would on intimacy find they deserved.

To this request, urged with great energy Sidney gave the desired assent, declaring that his wishes should in every instance be the guide of her conduct.

Just then the door opened, and young Montague's servant, shewing in Mr. Savage, said he would let his master know that he wished to see him.

Sidney's confusion and vexation at this most unwelcome intrusion she vainly endeavoured to conceal. Mr. Savage, surprised by the perturbation and constraint of her manner, and scarcely replying to Major Sedley with whom he was slightly acquainted, fixed his eyes on her with a look of such inquiry as redoubled her confusion and aroused Sedley's indignation, who glanced his eyes towards her, as if in her countenance to read the explanation of what so much amazed him. Struck with a sensation of anger and dismay at perceiving her agitation, he walked abruptly to a window, disliking to have his emotion observed, and dreading, after the injustice of his former suspicions, to yield again to their influence, without some more decided proof than mere looks or appearances could convey.

Terrified by Mr. Savage's looks, and by Sedley's manner, which so strongly indicated his feelings, Sidney endeavoured to command her emotion, and to speak to Mr. Savage as usual ; but her voice so evidently faltered, that Mr. Savage, still more enraged by this confirmation of his jealous suspicions, was going for-

ward to express his feelings, when the entrance of young Montague and Captain Elmore recalled him to recollection, and he turned away with a gesture of disdain and resentment. Charles addressing him with all his former kindness and cordiality, and Captain Elmore with that easy good breeding their slight acquaintance demanded, he so far conquered his indignation as to reply to each without any very marked singularity of manner.

Major Sedley soon recovered from the first shock he had felt at observing sensations of anger in Mr. Savage, and of confusion in Sidney, which seemed to warrant a belief that he considered himself ill treated, and that she felt conscious he had some reason, for he had heard of his particular attention to her ; but he resolved to suspend his judgment till better informed of the circumstances, and why she had omitted any mention of his name. Approaching the table at which she was seated to prepare tea, he leaned over her chair, and telling her in a low voice he would now go to escort Mrs. Montague home, as she did not wish her son to have any suspicion of her visit, left the

room with feelings of renewed mortification and displeasure at observing her again colour violently on meeting Mr. Savage's eye directed towards her with an expression of all his former wrath.

Scarcely had the Major left the room, when Captain Elmore, going up to Sidney, asked her if he had any intention of returning ; and then, observing her uneasiness, said with great warmth, " If any thing disagreeable has occurred, I entreat you will mention it to me : I need scarcely say you may depend on me, and do not let any motive withhold you from enabling me to prevent a repetition of such scenes as have already taken place."

" I know not how to mention what has distressed me," replied Sidney, " scarcely even to account for my feelings ; the Major is, I fear, offended, and I assure you without any cause."

No more was requisite to convince Captain Elmore of the true state of Sedley's feelings, and in the same low tone he continued, " Do not consider me impertinent if I ask, has not that gentleman," glancing his eyes towards Mr. Savage, " paid you very particular atten-

tion? nay, if he has not even paid his addresses to you?"

Unable to deny that he had, when thus explicitly asked, Sidney, after a moment's hesitation, answered, "Yes."

"And have you mentioned the circumstance to Sedley?"

"No," replied she, "I felt myself bound in honour to Mr. Savage to suppress such a communication, as I believed it to be quite unknown."

"Sedley and I were informed of it long since," replied Elmore; "but tell me, have they spoken to each other?"

"Not more than the usual salutation; scarcely indeed that."

"And where is Sedley gone? I saw him speak to you before he left the room: did he say what business called him away?"

"Yes, he told me he was going to escort my aunt home: but don't say so to Charles; he will himself tell you why he would not wish to have it mentioned."

"Most certainly I shall not allude to the subject; but will you allow me to speak to

you with candour? Will you feel offended if I offer my advice?"

"No surely," said Sidney with great earnestness, "but much obliged by your kind intention."

"Let me then prevail on you to speak to Sedley of this business the first moment you have an opportunity: if he has a fault in his disposition, it is that of being too easily offended where his affections are engaged: of mean jealousy, or low suspicion, he is utterly devoid; but any seeming want of confidence, any disregard to his feelings, he cannot brook; and though he might not perhaps think himself justified in avowing his sentiments, or that pride might induce him to conceal them, I know how deeply they will corrode his peace; for, so completely has he centred his affections in you, that what, in another, he would pass over with indifference, from you will wound him to the soul; do then, I entreat, in this, and every other subject, treat him with perfect candour, and you will for life command his undivided affections. To his honour you may safely confide, and let no false delicacy with

respect to Mr. Savage interfere to give poor Otwage one moment's unnecessary pain."

"I will most readily, most gratefully, follow your advice," said Sidney ; "and if you would, meanwhile, mention what has just passed, you would infinitely oblige me, as the Major appeared more hurt than I must confess I think he had any cause to feel."

"It only proves to you," said Elmore, smiling, "that I know his disposition well : he is a noble generous-hearted fellow as ever existed ; but, like every human being, is liable to error, and will at times yield his judgment to the guidance of his passions ; but depend on me for speaking to him as you desire."

Charles, who had been occupied looking over the plan of a new house which Mr. Savage intended to build, and had brought to shew him, now advanced to the table ; and Captain Elmore entering into conversation with them, Sidney endeavoured to address Mr. Savage as usual, but he replied to her with a degree of coldness that soon compelled her to silence.

Anna soon after coming into the room,

Mr. Savage appeared extremely pleased to see her, and eager to manifest his feelings. Taking a seat beside Sidney, she told her, in a low voice, that Mrs. Montague desired she would not wait tea for her, as she was so much affected at her parting with Lady Beauchamp, she could not prevail on herself to make her appearance; and then added, aloud, that her mamma was particularly engaged, and could not come down till supper.

Just then Major Sedley entered the room, and, without evincing any remembrance of what had given him so much displeasure, sat down beside Sidney, and continued to pay her the most marked attention, though there was a cloud on his brow, and a something of sorrow and resentment in his air and manner, which Sidney had never before seen him display; yet, however grieved and mortified that he could even for a moment doubt her affection or strict regard to honour, she took so much pains to conciliate him, that she very soon succeeded in restoring him to his former animation.

Mr. Savage, who had entered into conver-

sation with Anna, displaying a mixture of haughtiness, and want of consideration, almost amounting to disdain of every person present, was aroused to such a pitch of indignation by observing Sidney's conduct to Major Sedley, that, totally thrown off his guard, he felt all desire of concealing his sentiments lost in a wish of quarrelling with Sedley, though under what pretext he could not well determine.

Charles, observing Mr. Savage address his conversation to Anna with so much apparent gaiety, concluded that resentment had subdued his affection for Sidney ; and, without paying him any farther attention, talked to Captain Elmore, when a mention of some circumstance that had occurred at Belle Vue recalling Mr. Elverton to his recollection, he asked Elmore, with a laugh, if he had seen him since his elopement.

“ No,” replied he, “ I never went to see him, as my time has been much occupied since I came to town ; but French, who has been repeatedly at his house, tells me he is strangely altered since his marriage.”

“ To that I can bear testimony,” exclaimed

Charles ; “ he appears to have laid aside all his soft and tender attention to the fair lady ofhi s heart, who does not seem much satisfied with her lot. With all her timidity, she loved a red coat ; and as that, I verily believe, was Elverton’s chief recommendation in her eyes, in laying it aside he appears to have forfeited all pretensions to her favour.”

“ If such was her motive for marrying him,” cried Captain Elmore, laughing, “ I think he has deserved his fate ; the least attention he could have paid to such a predilection was to continue to wear what alone rendered him pleasing to her.”

“ The lady you speak of,” cried Mr. Savage, with a saucy sn^rer, “ does not, I think, stand much indebted to you for the representation you make of her understanding · to be caught by a mere coat does not speak much in her favour, though there are women with whom it has an all-powerful influence ; but by what standard they deserve to be estimated I leave it to better judges to determine.”

Charles, astonished by a speech, that, from the direction of Savage’s eye, he perceived

was levelled at Sidney, hesitated how to act, and doubtful whether or not he should seem to notice it; while Sedley, who had made the same observation, gave a smile of such contempt as crimsoned Savage's cheeks. Elmore, with more presence of mind, drily exclaimed, "By what standard we have estimated them, Mr. Savage, you have had sufficient proof, when you charged Montague and myself with severity for arraigning the understanding of the lady whose choice could be guided by such superficial advantages; though that such was really the case I cannot, from my own personal knowledge, venture to affirm."

"I can, however," cried Charles, "as she has made no secret to me, nor indeed to any person, of her disapprobation of Elverton's leaving the army. Miss Flowerdale, you know," continued he, archly, "was never famous for keeping her own counsel, and even Savage himself heard her avow the same sentiments."

"True," cried Mr. Savage, haughtily, "I now recollect the lady to whom you allude; she did not seem to have been very happy in her choice; few men would have made so

ungrateful a return for the distinction she conferred as he appeared to do ; but those whose whole claims to distinction are comprised in a red coat should be more cautious how they forfeit their only chance of exciting admiration, more particularly the admiration of a lady who was at least fair and young, whatever other foibles might have obscured these advantages."

" I must beg a truce on this subject," said Anna, " as I cannot bear to hear poor Eliza Elverton so harshly censured. She was a little silly, I grant, in choosing Mr. Elverton ; but then, if he was a fop, I believe he was nothing worse ; and I dare say they live very happily together."

" As happily, I suppose," said Mr. Savage, smiling disdainfully, " as most other married couples do. She has not more grossly erred in her choice of a partner than thousands of others who have preceded, and will yet follow her example, mistaking dress for fashion and accomplishments, bravado for gallantry, and the superficial acquirements of a coxcomb for the knowledge and information of a man of taste and literature."

"General satires against any profession, Mr. Savage," exclaimed Captain Elmore, much hurt by his evident desire to insult Major Sedley, and by his venturing such a sneer, in their presence, "are never just, and should always be avoided by every man of sense or good breeding, more particularly in the presence of those to whom they may be supposed to attach; and if, sir, you judge of the army in general from the many despicable characters the urgent necessity of the present times has introduced into it, I must take the liberty of observing, your knowledge on the subject is rather confined. Men of the first rank, the first education, are now anxious to devote their time and talents to the service of their country, and to acquire well-merited renown. In the regiment to which I have the honour to belong, you will find those who are well calculated to convince you of your mistake, and who are I trust entitled to claim, and perfectly adequate to support, the character of gentlemen, in any manner that they may be called on to do so."

"To you or your regiment, sir," cried Mr. Savage, colouring with shame and resentment

at the severe retort to which he had exposed himself, “ I neither meant, nor made an allusion, nor could intend general satire of a profession so honourable; but individual worthlessness, you cannot deny, may belong to any profession ; and that your regiment has not been wholly exempt, your own experience of Mr. Elverton’s character must convince you ; nor do I intend to retract, continued he, glancing his eyes towards Sidney and the Major, ‘ that ladies sometimes choose from mere superficial advantages, and that gentlemen are sometimes content with their undeserved favour, though devoid of merit to acquire their approbation, or of spirit to defend their pretensions.’ ”

Rising from the table, he sauntered towards a window, Sedley remaining silent, though his heightened colour evinced how well he understood the sneers directed against him, but which his affection for Sidney, and apprehension of giving her uneasiness, determined him for the present to pass unnoticed. Elmore comprehending his feelings, and unable farther to interfere, endeavoured to enter into conversation with Anna ; while Sidney, overwhelmed with terror, could scarcely so far

command her agitation as to keep her seat, though not daring to utter a word from a dread of still farther irritating both.

Charles, who had listened to this conversation with feelings of anger and surprise, hesitated for a few moments, uncertain what part he ought to act, when willing to hope Savage could not have directed such sneers against Sedley, of whose peculiar situation he might be ignorant, he arose, and following him to the window, where he was carelessly looking out, requested to speak to him in private, and Savage not choosing to refuse compliance, they left the room together.

The moment they were gone, Sedley, anxious to avoid any reference to what had past, and to alleviate the uneasiness he saw Sidney felt, began to speak of Mrs. Montague, and to express his sorrow at her having been so deeply affected at her parting with Lady Beauchamp, asking Anna "if it was with her own approbation Lady Beauchamp left Ireland."

"Oh yes," cried Anna, deceived by his calmness into a belief that he had not attended to Mr. Savage's sneers sufficiently to feel the re-

séntment they were calculated to inspire ; “ Sir Townly has persuaded her that London is the only place in which a man of fashion can reside, and she seems delighted with the journey, and was very much surprised at mamma for asking if she would return in the course of the autumn or winter, declaring she had no such intention, as Sir Townly proposed taking a handsome country-seat in England, as his house in Ireland is rather out of repair. He may do this if he pleases, but I must confess I am inclined to suspect his own pleasures will take up too much of his time and money to allow him to bestow a great deal of either on Fanny’s peculiar gratifications. She, however, thinks otherwise, and the longer she can do so the better.” •

“ How is it,” exclaimed Sedley, “ that you have formed so much a juster judgment of Sir Townly than your sister, who ought to have known the world so much better ?”

“ She ought, I grant,” said Anna, laughing, “ but that does not prove that she did ; and Fanny was so much accustomed to have all her whims and caprices complied with, she

never could bring herself to believe there was a human being who would venture to contradict her: and Sir Townly, though the first to teach her a contrary lesson, she seems consider as only more peculiarly entitled to her affection. That I should form a better opinion, at least a juster one, of Sir Townly than she did, is not wonderful, as I could not disbelieve what my papa and Charles told me, though she chose to do so. How far she may lament her folly, I cannot say; but I would not this moment change places with her to be mistress of the universe: I think him one of the most odious men I ever yet beheld."

"It has been a most unhappy infatuation indeed," said Sedley; "but, in pity to Mrs. Montague, restrain your opinion of Sir Townly, as, the less she knows or hears of him, the happier she will be."

"I never speak of him to mamma," replied she, "except when I cannot avoid it, and never give my sentiments to her with the same freedom I do to you; and, as neither Charles nor papa can endure to hear his name mentioned, I hope mamma will soon be inclined to forget he is in existence."

In this hope the Major joined, though he did not think it very likely to be realized, and still kept up a conversation with Anna and Captain Elmore, in which Sidney tried to join. Dreading to rouse Sedley to violence by mentioning Mr. Savage, or attempting any explanation of her own conduct, which might still farther increase his resentment by so convincing a proof of how wantonly ill he had behaved to her, she sat in a state of the most restless agitation.

Charles, meanwhile, taking Mr. Savage into another room, and without seeming to think he could possibly have suspected the engagement entered into between Sidney and Major Sedley, he proceeded to state that circumstance. “Had I known of your being in town, I would have called on you for the purpose of mentioning it to the Major, the gentleman to whom she so frankly avowed that her affections were engaged; and, as the barriers that then subsisted to prevent their union have been since removed, they are to be married in a few weeks; though, as the explanation took place only two days previous to the

present evening, it is still unknown in the world. Under such circumstances," continued Charles, "I need scarcely say what were my feelings on hearing you utter such sneers, which, for the moment, I did believe were said for no other purpose than to offend Sidney; but a little reflection convincing me that you could not wantonly insult any woman, particularly by one who has treated you with the most scrupulous honour and delicacy, nor harbour feelings so inconsistent with the sentiments and principles I have ever heard you profess, I determined to deal candidly with you, and frankly ask if what you have said was intended to insult both my cousin, and the man to whom she is to be married, or merely as a general censure of the worthless and insignificant part of the army, and the silly women who admire them? If this simply was your intention, you will not, surely, hesitate to say so, and thus exonerate yourself from the suspicion of being guided by an unworthy resentment,—as with scrupulous delicacy, I will repeat, Sidney has conducted herself, not suffering you even for a moment to indulge hopes she did not intend to realize;

indeed such has been her care to avoid wounding your feelings in the most remote manner, that not even to Sedley did she mention a syllable of what has passed ; and therefore evident as is the resentment he feels at your pointed insult to himself, he cannot even conjecture from what motive it could have been offered. I have said thus much as I have always regarded you as my friend, and as a man of honour and strict integrity ; your answer will now determine whether that opinion has been judiciously formed."

" Your tone is high, Montague," exclaimed Mr. Savage, haughtily, though nearly over-powered with the conflicting emotions of sorrow at hearing Sidney was lost to him, and anger at having yielded to his passions, and betrayed his disappointment : " so high that I do not well understand what answer you expect from me."

" Whatever may have been my tone," cried Charles coldly, " my intentions at least have been friendly, as an unwillingness to view you in any other light than as a man of that nice feeling and excellent understanding which I

have so long considered you, has alone induced my present application ; but if it is your wish to decline any explanation, and to suffer me to adopt the opinion which your conduct obviously warrants, I have only to express my regret ; but this is no time or place to say more."

Mr. Savage possessed too much discernment not to feel aware of the situation in which he had placed himself ; and though to his own heart he could not deny that he had designed to offend Sidney, and to express contempt for his rival, yet, he could with strict truth affirm he was ignorant of any engagement subsisting between them, or that Sedley was the man of Sidney's early choice, and had merely given way to his sarcastic disposition, which coinciding with his wrath, he had not considered how openly he betrayed, and inevitably degraded himself. He now felt himself in the mortifying predicament of being compelled to avow that he was equally deficient in sense and propriety, or to offer an apology for his conduct by declaring his ignorance, and consequent innocence, of any wish to insult.

As Savage possessed too much real spirit to have recourse to empty bravado, and being conscious that his intrepidity no man could question, he felt it more consistent with his character to make the declaration Charles required, than, by refusing it, to allow that he was deficient in the feelings of a gentleman, by attempting to defend conduct no sophistry could justify. As the mild and manly spirit of Montague's manner had insensibly calmed him to a recollection of his better feelings, on seeing Charles about to quit the room, he recalled him; and his pride enabling him to suppress the complicated emotions he felt, he thus addressed him, though with a look and tone of haughtiness which he scarcely wished to restrain: " You have declared, sir, that my conduct of this evening has given you reason to suppose you have been deceived in the opinion you had formed of me: I now ask on what principles you can justify such an assertion, or suppose that I could intend any offence, either to Miss Montague, or to nearly a total stranger, by merely giving an opinion on general subjects, and general characters? Could I have suspected that a connexion I have been

positively assured was broken off could be on the eve of being completed ? or suppose that a man, whose name I never heard mentioned by either you or Miss Montague, and never saw at your house, could be the person she had selected ? You declare that it has been only within the last few days that matters have been finally arranged : you have therefore answered your own question respecting my ignorance on the subject, as I could not be supposed to know what you declare was kept a secret, more particularly as I have only this morning returned to town. With Miss Montague's conduct respecting myself, I am perfectly satisfied ; and should be sorry to think she supposed me deficient in that propriety of which she has set me the example. As I have, to your knowledge for some time past, resigned even the wish of acquiring her favour, I came here this evening for no purpose in which she had the most remote share, but simply to ask your opinion and advice about my house. If you consider this as a justification of sentiments which I shall never retract, because convinced of their justice, I shall have no objection to bury in

oblivion the transaction of the present evening : but if you still think yourself deceived in the opinion which you had formed of my character, I will readily agree to any proposal you may think better calculated to rectify your mistake, or to vindicate my conduct."

Charles, though perceiving, from this speech, that peculiar asperity of Mr. Savage had been excited by Sidney's attention to the Major, yet feeling inclined to pardon the momentary anger that had betrayed him into such indecent behaviour, and extremely desirous to induce him to offer an apology to Major Sedley, of whose resentment he could not entertain a doubt, however offended by the haughty and peremptory tone which he had assumed, replied with great calmness, " In declaring you could not mean an insult, you only justify the opinion I have ever formed of you ; no other proof is requisite to shew how perfectly I have estimated your character : nor ought you, Savage, to address me with a tone and countenance of such resentment, as the friendship I have professed I have ever studied to evince, and in no instance more strongly

than by giving you an opportunity of removing from your character the aspersion that must have been cast on it, if, leaving you in ignorance of the offence you had undesignedly given to Major Sedley, I had permitted him to seek the reparation he must have considered due to his injured feelings, and which you could not have refused, however unwilling you, or any gentleman, must feel to confess you had wantonly insulted a man of honour, and a young lady who was peculiarly entitled to your respect and attention."

"I don't understand how Major Sedley can consider himself insulted," cried Savage, whose cheeks glowed with indignation at the proposal of apologizing to him. "Could he suppose himself classed amidst the general herd of worthless and contemptible fellows, whose only pretensions to the characters of gentlemen consist in the uniform they wear,—men whose despicable conduct degrade the profession they dishonour. If, as you say, Miss Montague never mentioned my name to him, how could he suppose I meant him more than Captain Elmore, when ignorant of his present situation? He spoke

not to me, nor did I to him address a syllable on the subject ; and, whatever apology I may consider due to Miss Montague, I can consider none due to him."

"Savage," cried Charles, with firmness, "if you intended no offence to Major Sedley, you can feel no hesitation in saying so. Though you were ignorant of his situation, he was conscious of it ; and, if you have no wish to force a quarrel, why wait merely to give him time to demand an explanation ? He did not speak to you, it is true ; but you cannot a moment doubt the motives that withheld him. To a man of Sedley's gentlemanly feelings and principles, to be convinced you did not wish to insult him will be all he can require to make him desirous to cultivate your friendship ; and, to a man of your spirit, I should consider it more becoming voluntarily to declare your error the moment you are convinced of it, than either to make such a concession to a stranger, or defend an insult you feel and acknowledge you had neither a right nor a wish to give."

"To Major Sedley's friendship, or to any man's," cried Savage, haughtily, "I am per-

fectedly indifferent; I am equally far from wishing to acquire his friendship, and from dreading his enmity: my honour, however, is of more consequence to me than to suffer him to suppose that I was actuated by resentment which I should consider disgraceful, as no woman's favour do I estimate at so high a price as to degrade myself by seeking it unworthily, or to betray a despicable regret for having failed to obtain it. Since therefore, from your representations, I must conclude that such is Major Sedley's opinion, I have no objection to undeceive him by avowing my ignorance of his plans and wishes; and, if he does not consider this sufficient, I shall take no farther trouble on the subject. This you will perceive I consider as due to myself; for, to him I neither owe nor will ever yield the most trifling concession."

However internally offended by Savage's excessive arrogance, Charles did not think it proper to confess his feelings; he therefore replied, that he had no doubt Mr. Savage would act whatever part he considered most consistent with the character of a gentleman.

'To determine what this should be, Savage took some time ; nor did Charles interrupt his deliberations. At length reflecting how impossible it would be to refuse some apology to Major Sedley, without confirming the insult he had so decidedly disavowed, yet feeling the utmost repugnance to the idea of appearing as if compelled into it, his pride assisted his reason to point out that the best and only method of extricating himself from the disagreeable dilemma into which his passions had betrayed him, was to return to the drawing-room, and publicly declare his ignorance of, and utter indifference to, any engagement into which Sidney had entered. He therefore made this proposal to Charles, who assenting, they returned together.

Mr. Savage instantly advanced to Sidney, who trembled and grew pale at his approach, and exclaimed with a haughty carelessness of manner, though the height of his colour shewed the internal tumult of his mind, " Mr. Montague, madam, has this moment informed me of a circumstance, which, the secrecy it has been thought necessary to observe, together

with my absence from town, has precluded my hearing even hinted at, and therefore concluding myself at perfect liberty to declare my opinions of the world without seeming to intend any particular allusions, I find I have undesignedly uttered sentiments which might wear an appearance of disrespect to you : I have therefore returned for the purpose of declaring my ignorance of your situation, and consequent innocence of any intentional offence, as my past conduct must convince you I never could have classed Miss Montague with Mrs. Elverton, or the frivolous part of her sex. Thus much, madam, I feel myself called on to say, as, satisfied with your conduct, I should consider it as being equally wanting in respect to you and to myself could I evince resentment which I neither felt nor intended. After such a declaration, sir," continued he, addressing Major Sedley with added coldness, " I cannot consider any apology due to you. Equally a stranger to you as to your situation, I could intend no offence to a man I have never met except in public, or known except from common report, which proclaims him of unquestioned honour.

By such a man I should feel extremely unwilling to be considered as acting unworthily the character I have hitherto supported, and the rank I hold in society."

Equally surprised and delighted at this address, which relieved her from the misery she had endured, and which Mr. Savage's preceding conduct had so little taught her to expect, Sidney replied by assuring Mr. Savage she felt no resentment for what she could not consider as intended to offend her, and thanking him for the many instances of kindness and attention he had ever shewn her.

Major Sedley, though offended by Mr. Savage's manner, and piqued by the arrogance he displayed, was yet averse to engage in any quarrel he could with honour avoid, and replied, " Whatever resentment, Mr. Savage, I may have felt, at insinuations which from my present situation were naturally construed as intentional insults, your ignorance on the subject, and avowal of having had no such notion, has wholly subdued ; and, as I am so vain as to think I cannot be classed with those against whom you directed your satire, I will not feel

offended at strictures, which, however severe, cannot individually affect me. Of the character you bear, and the rank you hold in society, sir, I am not ignorant, however slight has been our acquaintance ; and I therefore disdain imputing to such a man any action unworthy of either."

Mr. Savage bowed, but made no reply ; and walking to a window, to which Anna had retired on seeing him enter, he engaged in a gay whispering conversation with her. Delighted at this conclusion of an affair, which the preceding scene convinced her might have produced very serious consequences, she took such pains to entertain him, as considerably assisted his own anxious wish of appearing indifferent and unconcerned.

Charles, no less desirous to promote harmony, endeavoured to introduce general conversation ; and though his marked attention to Sedley, and the volatile spirits he assumed, irritated Mr. Savage, yet he concealed his feelings, and forced himself to converse, though no exertion could disguise his resentment, or enable him to conceal the disordered expression of his look and manner.

In the general conversation Captain Elmore joined with ease and good humour, and Major Sedley with reserved politeness ; but Sidney, mortified by the whole transaction, could scarcely force herself to support her part with any tolerable share of cheerfulness.

About ten o'clock Mrs. Montague came into the drawing-room, and Sidney perceived with sorrow the extreme dejection of her air and manner. Immediately after her entrance, Mr. Savage rose to take leave ; but Mrs. Montague with great politeness, and Charles with much of his usual cordiality, pressing him to stay supper, he consented, determined to shew how little emotion he felt at knowing that Sidney was decidedly engaged to another.

Major Sedley taking his compliance as a wish to preserve the friendship of the Montague family, and feeling himself called on to make some effort to acquire the esteem of their particular friend, paid him much more attention than he had hitherto shewn him ; but Mr. Savage met his advances with such forbidding reserve, that the Major, disgusted and offended, soon gave up the attempt, and allowed him to

follow his own inclination of confining his conversation entirely to Anna. Though little duped by an appearance of preference of which she well understood the motive, she had no objection to encourage the attention of a man whose consequence in the fashionable world rendered his notice an honour,

CHAP. XIV.

EARLY on the ensuing day Major Sedley called at Merrion-square, and Sidney, on going into the drawing-room, found him and Charles engaged in earnest conversation. Both ceased speaking on her entrance, and Charles soon after left the room.

The moment he was gone, she determined to relate to Sedley the reasons which had induced her to waive any mention of Mr. Savage's proposals; but the Major, without giving her time to pronounce a syllable, exclaimed with great warmth, "How constantly am I betrayed into conduct deservedly offensive to one in whom my every hope of happiness is placed, and my feelings exclusively centred! How can I apologize for the resentment to which I last night yielded myself a prey, on observing the manner in which Mr. Savage ventured to evince feelings he had so little right, to which I fear

that I justly incurred your displeasure, though, generously attentive to my happiness, you sought to sooth emotions you may have considered as the result of narrow-minded jealousy ; but such, my Sidney, I could not entertain : the woman I could suspect, I could not love ; though the slightest appearance of reserve, or want of confidence, gives me a degree of pain which proves an adequate punishment for a weakness I have often, though vainly, tried to conquer, those who possess my heart command my most unlimited confidence, and with theirs, in return, I cannot dispense."

"The change in your manner did give me pain, I will confess," said Sidney, "but such I shall never again feel, as never hereafter shall any motive induce me to withhold the unbounded confidence to which you are entitled, and which, had I consulted my own wishes alone, I should have placed in you ; but Mr. Savage was very kind, very attentive to me at a time that Mr. Ingram's conduct rendered his good nature particularly serviceable ; and as I know his pride renders him peculiarly vulnerable on this subject, I did think myself bound

in honour and delicacy to preserve the secret of his attachment, which, had he not betrayed, I certainly never intended to have mentioned ; though the moment Captain Elmore spoke to me last night, and said that such reserve would hurt you, I determined to be candid, even before Mr. Savage's own words declared the honour he had conferred on me."

" Elmore told me of this," cried Sedley, " he repeated all you said to him, and read me a serious lecture on my folly, advising me not to allow my happiness to be the sport of my feelings, nor to suppose that I could ever arbitrarily guide the will and inclinations of another by the standard of my own sentiments or wishes. Notwithstanding the severity with which he censured me, I could not feel offended by advice which I knew originated in the most ardent desire to promote my future as well as present happiness. I have said all this to convince you that it is more from a constitutional weakness than from any other source, that I was led to give you even a moment's pain, and cautiously will I in future guard against yielding to similar irritability."

"With me," cried she, with tender earnestness, "you need never keep such a guard. Captain Elmore has also given me advice, which my own inclination prompts me most scrupulously to follow; and to convince you how little I wish to conceal any thing that has occurred, I will frankly relate some circumstances which will clearly explain all the motives that have guided my conduct, though feelings of delicacy have hitherto restrained me from speaking on the subject."

"No, no," exclaimed Sedley, eagerly, "I will listen to no such relation. What any cause could induce you to conceal, I have no wish to hear. Kind and generous as I know Elmore to be, he might be deceived, and have given advice you cannot like to follow."

Sidney, determined that nothing should restrain her from following Captain Elmore's prudent counsels, which arose from the most thorough knowledge of Sedley's character, and so earnestly pressed the Major to listen to her, saying she should consider a refusal as proceeding from pique, that he at length assented, to convince her, he said, that by acceding

to her wishes, he should best prove how heartily desirous he was of conquering his weakness.

*Sidney then mentioned the disagreeable situation in which Fanny had placed her with respect to Charles, and Mr. Savage's kindness to both; her own avowal to Mr. Savage that her affections were engaged, and his and Charles's conduct through the whole affair, saying that, as Mr. Savage had not been informed of the name of the person to whom she had declared her affections were engaged, she supposed he had been thrown off his guard by observing her attention to one he considered as nearly a stranger to her; as, so far from shewing any displeasure at her candid confession, he had declared how much it had raised her in his opinion. The consideration of how frivolous and trifling her conduct must have appeared to him, under such a supposition, had forbid her to feel any resentment for ill-humour which the mere passion of the moment had produced, as she believed Mr. Savage to be a man of real honour and excellent principles, though the

arrogance of his disposition often betrayed him into offensive conduct.

To a relation that in so many ways convinced Sedley of the strength of Sidney's attachment to himself, of her nice principles of delicacy, and the various mortifications to which his father's letter had exposed her, he listened with mingled emotions of sorrow, resentment, and admiration. The moment it was concluded, with impassioned energy he expressed his feelings and regret for having given her the slightest additional cause of uneasiness, and his gratitude to Elmore for so frankly cautioning him against similar conduct in future.

Grieved to perceive how much his spirits had been lowered by the whole affair, Sidney told him she could not be offended by feelings that shewed such tender interest in her affections; and that, so far from considering them as a proof of weakness, she must consider them demonstrations of the peculiar strength and delicacy of his regard; for, the moment he ceased to shew an anxiety to command her unqualified confidence, she should

esteem it an infallible symptom of the decline of his attachment. " You must therefore," continued she, smiling, " pay the penalty you have incurred, and listen with patience to all my wearisome details of what I see, hear, and think, or you will be tormented with reproaches that you will have no means of evading, however little inclined to endure them; as I do not dread that you will, like Sir Townly Beau-champ, command my silent acquiescence by the all-powerful motives of fear."

" In how many ways," cried Sedley, in a tone of delight, " am I to be indebted to Elmore's friendship ! I almost felt angry with him from a dread that you would consider me as meanly solicitous to acquire confidence which you did not wish to grant ; and yet I only find he knows me better than I know myself. He has judged with equal candour and discernment of you ; for he told me frankly to demand your confidence, and I might be certain of obtaining it with ready pleasure : and though the humiliating fear of appearing suspicious in your eyes withheld me from following his advice, yet, after the declaration you

have just made, I will no longer hesitate to confess how little I can endure the slightest appearance of reserve in those I love. In future I will, without disguise, confide every thought and every feeling to you, certain of your sympathy, and that you will, with tenderness and kindness, pardon the errors into which natural frailty and accidental circumstances may lead me."

"Most certainly," said Sidney, laughing: "but then I shall expect similar indulgence from you."

The Major was beginning, with all the enthusiasm of love, to declare how little he thought she could ever call for such an exertion of his indulgence, when the entrance of Mrs. Montague and Miss Watkins obliged him to change the subject.

As Mr. Savage still continued to pay casual visits at Merrion-square, Charles thought himself called on to renew his invitation to him of spending some part of the ensuing autumn at Belle Vue; though, as Mr. Savage's former friendship had been succeeded by cold and distant reserve, he felt less inclination for his society.

This invitation Mr. Savage declined, saying he had promised to take a tour to the Lakes of Cumberland, and from thence to Scotland, with his particular friend, Lord I—— ; adding, with an intelligible sneer, that he was a sincere friend, and that he would therefore sacrifice the pleasure of accompanying him, to his intention of passing the summer on his own estate, for the purpose of superintending the building of his house, which he wished to have finished under his own eye.

The anger Charles felt at this hint overcoming the chagrin which a diminution of their friendship had at first occasioned, he replied, with indifference, he should be sorry to take up any part of his time from more agreeable pursuits.

Thus ended a friendship which Charles had taken some pains to cultivate, and in which he felt sincere pleasure ; but such is the general conclusion of the friendships of the world, begun and carried on for mutual convenience, and speedily yielding to the first occurrence that produces a disunion of interests or opinions.

CHAP. XV

NOTHING more material occurred during the remainder of Sidney's stay in Dublin, which was very short, as Mr. Montague was anxious to return to Belle Vue, from whence he had been detained so long beyond his usual time.

Thither they were very soon followed by General Sedley, the Major, and Captain Elmore. A few days after their arrival Sidney and Major Sedley were united by those bonds, which, though guilt may forcibly rend asunder, death alone ought to dissolve.

Immediately after the ceremony was performed they set out for Abbeyville, accompanied by General Sedley and Captain Elmore. Here they were met by Mr. Sedley, his two daughters, and the principal members of the Sedley family, by all of whom Sidney was received and treated with the most flattering

and endearing kindness, particularly by Mr. Sedley, who appeared as anxious to obliterate every disagreeable impression from her mind, as he was delighted with her beauty and manners, and the unaffected sweetness of her disposition.

At Abbeyville they remained as long as Sedley could absent himself from his regiment, and then returned to town, accompanied by Emma Sedley, a lovely and interesting girl, to whom Sidney had become much attached.

The absence of the fashionable part of the world from town precluded all sort of dissipation, and Sidney passed her time in a manner infinitely more congenial to her taste than she had yet spent it, in the enjoyment of domestic felicity, enlivened by frequent social parties of Sedley's intimate friends, and in occasional excursions to the beautiful parts of the country surrounding Dublin. Emma Sedley became every day more attached to her, and seemed to enjoy unbounded happiness in her's and her brother's society, and in their attention and kindness; and Captain Elmore, though not an inmate, as he had hitherto been, of the

same house with Sedley, yet passed the greatest portion of his time there ; in short each hour was enlivened by social converse, or sweetened by domestic love.

Some time after Sidney's return to Dublin she received a letter from Mrs. Montague, informing her, that, since her departure from Belle Vue, she had never received a line from Lady Beauchamp, nor even knew where she was; and entreating her to request Major Sedley would, if possible, discover where she resided, that she might at least learn why she had left her in such ignorance of her movements, her feelings, and situation.

With this request Sedley complied by writing to a gentleman of his acquaintance in London, begging that he would make the most minute inquiries respecting Sir Townly Beauchamp, and where he resided ; cautioning him, however, to do it in the most private manner, but not to mention at whose desire the inquiry was made, as he felt averse to have Sidney's near connexion with Lady Beauchamp known by those among whom Sir Townly bore so infamous a character.

To this letter Major Sedley soon received an answer, informing him that Sir Townly resided in Bath, and in the utmost splendour, as he had been so fortunate as to marry an Irish heiress ; but of any thing farther respecting either him or his lady the gentleman was ignorant, as Sir Townly was a man he knew only from report. He concluded his letter by giving him his direction, and a hope that he had not taken him in for any money, as not even the splendid fortune he understood he had received with his wife would suffice to satisfy his creditors, at whose patience those who knew the enormous amount of his debts were much surprised.

This letter Sedley shewed to Sidney, advising her to write to Mrs. Montague, and give her Lady Beauchamp's address, but to suppress the remaining part of the information it contained, as he considered it cruel unnecessarily to harass her mind about a daughter who had in every instance made so ungrateful a return for her care and tenderness.

With this advice Sidney complied ; and, notwithstanding all she knew of Lady Beau-

champ's unamiable disposition, she felt truly shocked at learning from Mrs. Montague that though she had repeatedly written to her daughter, according to the direction she had received, she had never taken the slightest notice of her letters ; and therefore concluded that she had determined to break off all intercourse with her. She would therefore nevermore harass either herself or her friends for so ungrateful and undeserving a child, but confine her affection to those who merited her tenderness. Sidney, pleased at this prudent determination of Mrs. Montague, forbore any farther mention of Lady Beauchamp in her letters, and dismissed her from her mind, which now became occupied by her own immediate concerns. Mr. Levinstone's arrival in Dublin, together with the opening of Term, renewed her anxiety respecting her lawsuit, for the Hamiltons resisted her claims with the united force of perjury, and bribery ; goaded on by avarice, and revenge, as well as by disappointment, in having failed to prevent a connexion which they considered as a deep offence to Miss Hamilton, and as destructive to their own

projects : for, however they might have hoped to have wearied out Mr. Montague's patience; they could not indulge such an expectation with a man whose own personal interest was concerned to support her claims. Yet, though baffled and disgraced by the detection of their endeavours to injure and defame her, they did not despair of forcing Major Sedley into a compromise more soothing to their revenge than even the final acquisition of the contested property ; and thus, in some measure, repay themselves for their multiplied mortifications and disgraces.

To counteract their schemes, Major Sedley, assisted by his uncle, made the most vigorous exertions ; and, through Mr. Levinstone's assistance, was enabled to procure an attested copy of Mr. Forbes's will from the English Court of Records, where it had been registered, and for a length of time vainly sought, as the period of his death no person but Mr. Levinstone could exactly ascertain. But, this will was dated two years prior to the deed produced by the Hamiltons, and as this deed, however believed to be a forgery, could not be

proved so, it gave rise to the most complicated contentions between the parties, of how far it could take place of the will bequeathing the property, free and unencumbered, to the younger Mr. Forbes, from whom, in right of her mother, Sidney derived her claim. Though Sedley concealed his opinion from Sidney, from a dread of giving her uneasiness, he soon lost all hope of success, and almost regretted the sums he now feared he had so uselessly expended.

From similar motives of tenderness Sidney concealed her feelings, though she internally lamented the situation of her affairs, and the consequent embarrassments in which she had involved a husband, the deserved object of her affections; but, convinced by his looks and actions that no embarrassment nor uneasiness could lessen his attachment, she endeavoured, by redoubled attention, to sooth his anxiety, and reward his generous and disinterested affection.

Thus passed on several months; Sedley baffled and defeated in every attempt to procure the restitution of a property so unjustly

withheld ; nor could all Elmore's vigilance and abilities, though invariably directed to the same object, serve any other purpose than to support his harassed spirits.

That active interest in the service of his friends, which Elmore had hitherto so cheerfully and affectionately volunteered, it was now no longer in his power to bestow : his heart became engrossed by its own peculiar cares,—by feelings that clouded all his gaiety, and seemed to change his very nature.

Removed in early youth far distant from all except Major Sedley, who commanded his affections,—plunged into the vortex of fashionable life, where, as a younger brother, inheriting only a small fortune, however he might be liked as an acquaintance, he had little chance of being considered as an object deserving any peculiar attention from the mercenary and selfish females who compose the general mass of fashionable society,—he had escaped from even a transient impression of love, and embarked for the Continent with a heart devoid of every sentiment of regard, except for those with whom he had spent his

youth; and among whom he centred all the warmth of his feeling and affectionate disposition. As the scenes in which he mingled abroad were not much calculated to excite domestic feelings, though the years that elapsed had considerably ripened his judgment, he returned to Ireland with a fixed resolution of guarding his peace from any dangerous invader till his circumstances might enable him to support a family in the style to which his birth entitled him.

The success of General Sedley's exertions in procuring him a lucrative sinecure employment took off the restraints which prudence had hitherto imposed on his wishes, which, like Sedley's, all tended towards domestic happiness, and which his now being a daily witness of that which he enjoyed only served to increase.

Such was his situation when circumstances placed him almost an inmate of the same house with the lovely and attractive Emma Sedley, whom as a child he had loved with the fondest affection, and for whom, as Otwage Sedley's sister, he felt redoubled partiality on

meeting her as a woman. Thrown off his guard by the innocent frankness of her manner, such as she had been accustomed to treat him with, from the earliest period of infancy, when domesticated in her family, he experienced no alarm at the feelings she inspired, nor was aware of his danger till the jealousy he felt of the universal homage paid to her beauty convinced him of the situation of his heart, and led him to investigate what prospect he had of obtaining a woman for whom her family might naturally encourage high expectations. Dreading a repulse that must banish him for years, perhaps for life, from the only beings who commanded his affections, he made the most violent struggles to conquer his attachment, and regain his freedom ; and might have perhaps succeeded, had not the surprise and resentment that Emma evinced at his strange coldness convinced him that he had made a similar impression on her heart.

The long friendship that had subsisted between Emma and Captain Elmore, the habits of intimacy in which they lived, and their peculiar situation, together with the various cares

which at the time weighed on the minds of Sidney and Major Sedley prevented them from observing their mutual attachment ; nor till Elmore's anxiety to subdue his feelings caused so striking an alteration in his manners as to excite Sedley's attention had he perceived any thing unusual in his conduct ; and, as Emma redoubled her gaiety to deceive him, he could entertain no suspicion of the real cause, for Elmore resisted all his entreaties to reveal the cause of his oppression. Sedley, though surprised, at length yielded up the point ; and remembering all Elmore's former attention, he now repaid it by the most assiduous efforts to relieve and amuse him : but this merely increased the uneasiness it was designed to assuage, by augmenting his regret that any circumstance could interfere to compel secrecy, or create any possible diminution in the affection of so beloved a friend.

In this situation affairs remained for some time ; but when Elmore became convinced by Emma's manner, which could not deceive his watchful attention, that he had involved her equally with himself in anxiety and unhappi-

ness, he at last determined on the part he ought, thus circumstanced, to act, and resolved to make an honourable effort to obtain her ; and, if defeated, alike to relieve her and himself, by bidding a final adieu to her society.

One evening, therefore, as he and Major Sedley were sitting together, after apologizing for the reserve with which he had latterly treated him, and which necessity alone had enforced, he with great hesitation added, that he was going to put his friendship to the severest trial it had yet experienced, and one he would never willingly have hazarded.

“ Henry,” interrupted the Major with some emotion, “ did I not perceive by your agitation how bitter at this moment are your feelings, I should certainly express the resentment I must feel at your entertaining a doubt that my friendship would stand any test to which you can put it ; I have not merited the reserve with which you have treated me ; but, I wave all reproaches, and assure you, whatever may be the cause of your uneasiness, you never can experience a pang in which I shall not participate, and that there is no service (I will not

make a single exception) which I can render you, through myself or friends, that you may not freely command."

"Do not promise too much," replied Captain Elmore, in a restrained voice: "would you promise to assist me to obtain Emma's hand, if I were to make such a request?"

"To obtain Emma's hand!" repeated Sedley, starting with surprise at the explanation of a mystery that had so much astonished him.

Elmore covered his face, and remained silent. Sedley, in a few moments, recovering from his astonishment, rose, and, taking his hand, affectionately pressed it, saying, "Yes, Henry, with pleasure will I assist you, and with delight yield Emma to the protection of one so well calculated to make her happy; nor ought you on this subject to have experienced a feeling I could have spared you. What may be my father's, or my uncle's sentiments, I know not; but on my most active services you may implicitly rely, as the most splendid connexion she could form would not in my opinion bear a moments comparison with your worth, tenderness, and

honour. But is Emma acquainted with your sentiments? Does she participate in your feelings?"

Affected by a declaration for which he had scarcely ventured to hope, Elinore was unable to reply; and Major Sedley at length said, with a smile "I did not think there was any circumstance that could have so wholly over-powered your philosophy and fortitude, but I am not sorry to find our feelings on all subjects so congenial. How, my dear fellow, could you give way to such gloomy fears? how suppose I could have any objection to your union with Emma? Your income is at present excellent, your patrimonial property uninjured, and you have every chance of rising to eminence in your profession. In pecuniary matters alone, could there rest even the shadow of an objection? and to give her to you would in my mind overbalance every one except absolute penury. Recover your spirits, then, dear Henry, and more justly estimate your own worth and pretensions. Most supremely happy do I consider Emma in having obtained your affections; and with sincere gratitude will I

consign her to the care of one whose admirable understanding will be so adequate to guide and direct her innocent, yet, if ill-managed, perhaps dangerous, vivacity of disposition."

"Were I master of the universe," exclaimed Elmore, "to obtain Emma I should consider as the first of human blessings; but I cannot, Otwage, speak my feelings;—you know my heart, and know what they must be. If Mr. Sedley will only prove as generously kind and disinterested as you have been, there is no exertion I will not with transport make to secure to my beloved Emma that affluence she is so well entitled to enjoy. Yet I know not how still farther to increase the debt of gratitude I owe to your family. How, kindly, and like a beloved son, has Mr. Sedley ever treated me, and can I make him such a request, or appear to make such an ungrateful return for his care? Sophy Ormsby, too, I know will be dissatisfied. The General, in remembrance of his own sufferings, may forbear opposition; but I fear he will not approve of such a connexion for Emma. The dread of this and the fear of being cast off from your friend-

ship, and becoming an alien for life from the only family which I can consider as my own, has thus long compelled me to silence, and induced me to make every exertion to conquer an attachment as fervent as it was involuntary. Can you wonder that I recoiled with horror from such a prospect, and shuddered at the idea of being cast off alike from hope and consolation, and torn from all for whom my heart owns one sentiment of real affection. My own family are, you know, out of the question : early estranged from them, they view me but as a mere relation ; nor indeed can I consider them in any other light."

" Injustice is so inseparable from passion," cried Sedley, (" I believe I may say from human nature,) that I shall pardon that, which your own feelings have so severely punished, nor utter a reproach for doubting my friendship, which I did believe no circumstance could have led you to suspect ; but you have more strongly, more forcibly, stated your claims on me and on my family, by representing the situation to which you would have been reduced if repulsed by them, than any language could

have painted. At my mother's earnest and reiterated request, you were, at the early age of five years, resigned to her care: to consult my happiness the sacrifice was made, and by me you are as indisputably entitled to be treated as a brother, as if to the same parents we had owed our birth. Do not, therefore, again enter on a subject as painful to my feelings as it can possibly be to your's, by leading me to infer that you regret the sacrifice that was made for me, and which bred you an alien to your natural friends; nor believe my family so lost to every idea of justice, feeling, or honour, as thus in every way to sacrifice you to their own purposes. Did not my mother on her death-bed join our hands, charge us through life to consider each other as brothers, bequeath to you the same blessings on the same terms she addressed to her son,—and such did not her last words pronounce you? Could you believe then I would have outraged my mother's dying commands.—Have you, Henry, forgotten this? or can you suppose that my mother, if alive, would act with perverse cruelty to the child of her adop-

tion? or that my father, who was present at such a scene, and to whose tenderness she recommended you as strenuously as she did me, would belie the whole tenour of his life, to treat with unjustifiable cruelty the man whose juvenile years were passed in his house, and whom, I firmly believe, she loves better than he does myself?"

"I remember it all," cried Elmore, in a suffocated voice : "such a scene I could not forget; and the remembrance of it has weighed heavily on my mind, from an apprehension of violating the promise I then made her, of never seeking to engage her daughter's affections if it should appear contrary to the wishes of her friends; and the apprehension has given me feelings I will not now mention. Oh! Otwage, language could not convey an idea of the change your conduct this evening has produced in my heart,—the intolerable load of anxiety it has removed from thence,—for, though I meant not to convey the most distant insinuation of claims that have been so much more than satisfied, nor to hint at what you term a sacrifice, and that such

I never did or could consider it, I have for the last few weeks suffered more than I trust I shall again experience, for, as an exile branded with ingratitude and dishonour, could I alone view my future fate."

Sedley, who perceived that the naturally strong mind of Elthore had been weakened by the torturing apprehensions to which he had yielded himself a prey, felt every sentiment of displeasure vanish from his breast, and, with mingled kindness and judgment, he endeavoured to rally him into better spirits. When he had at length succeeded, he renewed his inquiry whether he and Emma had come to any explanation, as she had never given a hint on the subject to either Sidney or himself.

Elmore replied that they had not, for he had determined to subdue his passion ; but he was now convinced that Emma had fallen into the same snare with himself, and had yielded her heart without consulting her judgment. " From the moment I made this observation," continued he, " I resolved to apply to you, and by your conduct guide my own, as no temptation

tion could have induced me either to beguile Emma Sedley into impropriety, or to give her an additional feeling of uneasiness. Had I met the disappointment I so painfully, though so unjustly anticipated, it was my resolution to have gone abroad, without explaining my reasons for taking such a step, or giving her the unnecessary sorrow of knowing the misery to which she had innocently doomed me ; as to have sought her heart, and injured her happiness, without any possible relief to myself, was cruelty I could not have practised to a stranger, far less, my dear friend, to your sister. You may perhaps laugh at my vanity in thinking myself so secure of Emma's heart ; but there is a candour and innocence in her disposition, which render her unable to disguise her sentiments ; and though the gaiety she assumed deceived you and Sidney, it could not elude my jealous and watchful attention, and a thousand circumstances served to convince me it was fictitious ; indeed the very sorrow I felt for having engaged her affections, made my observation the more quick sighted. But on this subject I will not long enter-

tain a doubt ; and even if I have deceived myself, and that Emma refuses to sacrifice her better prospects to me, I cannot feel it as bitterly as at meeting a repulse from you,—to you I shall still look for consolation and kindness. But such a disappointment I do not apprehend ; there is a generosity and delicacy in Emma's disposition that would have taught her to shrink from the idea of wilfully injuring the happiness of any fellow-creature ; but the man she has known from her infancy, to whom she has so often confided her thoughts and wishes, him she could not so cruelly deceive, as of my feelings I am sure that she is not ignorant ; though I hitherto avoided any explicit declaration."

Sedley told him with a smile to satisfy his doubts as soon as he pleased, and that he would then accompany him to Sedley Park, to try their mutual influence with his father, who he did not think would require much solicitation ; and as to his sister Ormsby, there would be no necessity for consulting her on the subject, farther than inform her of the result of their application, as her objections, should she urge any, would have no weight with him.

Elmore thanked him with energy for his kindness, and they joined Sidney and Emma at tea, who were mutually surprised at Elmore's recovered animation, though neither uttered a remark on the subject.

In the course of the evening Elmore had a long conversation with Emma, when he fully related all the motives that had governed his conduct, and what had passed between him and her brother.

Delighted at this explanation of conduct which had grieved and surprised her, Emma rallied him on his fears and his punctilio, declaring that, if he had really loved her, he would not have been so guarded, nor so anxious to forget her. When she had at length exhausted his patience, she frankly confessed her reciprocal affection, saying she should feel happier to share his fate, whatever that might be, than that of any other human being, however exalted, as he was the only person for whom she had ever experienced a feeling of preference.

Elmore's delight at this acknowledgment of her sentiments repaid him for all the misery

he had endured : in his unbounded pleasure, and Emma's more volatile happiness, Sidney and the Major participated, though they could not forbear reproaching Emma for her reserve; but she laughed at their accusation, saying that she had too much pride to suffer any person to consider her as a forsaken damsel. Her papa, she said, had given her an early hatred to the idea of being looked upon in so degrading a light.

Major Sedley accompanied Captain Elmore to Sedley Park, to solicit his father's consent to his immediate union with Emma. This he obtained with little difficulty, as Mr. Sedley was so much pleased with the scrupulous honour of Elmore's conduct, that he declared it fully entitled him to his daughter ; and, though he had formed higher views for her, he could not, he said, endure to make a mope of his gay good-humoured Henry, nor banish for ever from his house the man whom he had treated as his child from his infantine days, whom he had so often taken on his knee, and promised to consider as his son ; a man who, except for his own instructions, could never

have succeeded in winning the heart of his lively, lovely, and darling Emma, declaring that he would live with more economy than he had hitherto practised, to enable him to add to her fortune.

With equal readiness and pleasure, General Sedley concurred in their union, insisting that, since his own children were amply provided for, Emma should accept from him the sum of 5,000*l.* Elmore endeavoured to dissuade him from taking such a step, but he would not listen to his remonstrances, asserting that he did not even repay his brother's bounty to him, when cast off by his father, as, independent of remitting the same sum to him to India, his brother had continued his father's early allowance to him, till he had, through the interest of his family, obtained him appointments fully adequate to his expenses.

Every preliminary being adjusted, the marriage was in a few weeks after solemnized at Sedley Park ; the Major, Sidney, and all the other near branches of the Sedley family being present. Mrs. Ormsby was by no means satisfied with a connexion which she

considered inferior to what Emma was entitled to form, but, as her family unanimously concurred in their approbation, she suppressed her sentiments.

From the Park Major Sedley and Sidney were recalled to Dublin, a few days after the celebration of the nuptials, by a letter from Mr. Levinstone, stating that he had at length, he hoped, discovered a means of putting a period to the long-contested suit for Wood-Lawn ; as he had fortunately met, in one of the charitable asylums in the city, a man who had formerly lived with old Mr. Forbes, and been in his service at the time of his death ; the date of which he perfectly remembered, as, immediately after that event, he had entered into trade with a sum of money which his master had bequeathed him ; but, failing in business, and encountering many other misfortunes, he had been compelled to retire to the Asylum for old and decayed Servants. He would come forward, on the ensuing Term, to give his testimony respecting several transactions, of which he had been an eye-witness, previous to his master's decease ; and he declared that he

had reason to believe the deed brought forward by the Hamiltons to be a forgery.

Immediately on his arrival in town, Major Sedley, accompanied by Mr. Levinstone, went to see this old man, who, after declaring his ignorance of the law-suit in question till informed of it by Mr. Levinstone, proceeded to state the following circumstances :—He had lived, he said, for several years with old Mr. Forbes, as his own man, and had been high in the favour and confidence of his master, who had left him the sum of 300*l.* as a reward for his long and faithful services, as his will would shew :—that, as his master had been in the habit of speaking to him of his private affairs, he had often expressed his discontent at the conduct of his grandson, the late Mr. Hamilton, and of his lady ; who, he said, were endeavouring to cajole him into making a settlement on them, in prejudice to his son Henry, who, they wished to persuade him, never would marry ; but that his master declared he would not consent to any such measure, but would leave his son his property to dispose of as he pleased. He had given his daughter

Hamilton a very fine fortune, and would not do any thing farther ; and had already made his will, declaring his intentions. Such, he said, his master had repeatedly declared to him. That, a few weeks previous to his master's death, which happened in London, on the 25th of July, 17—, Mrs. Hamilton had come to see him, and endeavoured, his master had said, to persuade him to make a deed in favour of her husband, and his son Fortescue, then an infant; but Mr. Forbes had positively refused, and had, to him, expressed great dislike to Mrs. Hamilton, adding, that he believed her an artful designing woman. A few days after this conversation his master had fallen into a lethargy, in which he had continued till his death : and that he had always understood it was in resentment of Mrs. Hamilton's conduct that Mr. Henry Forbes, his master's only son, had left the property of Wood-Lawn to Mrs. Montague, his niece, instead of leaving it to his nephew, Mr. Hamilton. He declared his readiness to prove, on oath, the above circumstances ; and that the character he had through life borne, and to which

many people of respectability could bear witness, would render his testimony, of great weight with a jury.

In consequence of this interview, Mr. ~~L~~ vinstone summoned this man to appear as witness in the cause, when he deposed to the above particulars; and, on being shewn the deed, he declared it a forgery, as his name was signed as being one of the witnesses; positively denying that the signature was his hand-writing, or that he had witnessed any such paper at the period specified; the deed bearing date the day previous to old Mr. Forbes's death, at which time, and for days before, his master had been incapable of any business whatever.

Mrs. Hamilton's counsel, surprised and confounded by this positive charge of forgery against their client, examined the man with the utmost rigour, animadverting, with great severity, on the improbability of any persons forging the name of a living witness.

In vain, however, they questioned and cross-questioned the man; he never faltered or varied in his evidence, and accounted for

such an oversight by stating, that, immediately after his master's death, he had left England, and had gone to America, under the hope of acquiring a rapid fortune ; but, failing in the attempt, and having lost all the money he had brought with him, he had returned to Ireland, where, feeling ashamed to apply to any of Mr. Forbes's family for assistance, against whose advice he had embarked in trade, he had no doubt been long considered as dead. This statement was amply corroborated by several respectable witnesses, who all concurred in giving him a most excellent character.

Confounded by this detection of his mother's guilt, of the extent of which he was till then ignorant, Fortescue Hamilton immediately sent a message to Major Sedley, stating that he would relinquish all farther claims to the Wood-Lawn estate on condition that he would stop all proceedings, and, taking the rents which had accumulated, since the property had been vested in the hands of trustees, allow each party to pay their own expenses.

To this proposal Sidney and Major Sedley agreed, as they disliked any farther investiga-

tion of an affair so fraught with odium to the Hamilton family, and therefore rejected the advice of their lawyers to refuse any compromise short of the full costs of suit, which, after Hamilton's tacit acknowledgment of the forgery, he could not have disputed.

CHAP. XVI.

SCARCELY had this affair been settled, when, one morning, as Sidney was sitting at breakfast with her husband, Captain Elmore, and Emma, who had lately returned to town, a servant came in with a letter, which he said a man had brought express from Belle Vue, whither the whole Montague family had returned only a few days before.

The letter was from Mrs. Montague to Sidney, and began by mentioning, that, the day preceding that on which she wrote, she had received a letter from Lady Beauchamp, to inform her that within the last fortnight, she had returned to Dublin in the deepest distress, as Sir Townly had not only dissipated every guinea he could command, but incurred such enormous debts, that his creditors had taken possession of the whole of his property ; nor did he, at the time she wrote, know how

to raise a shilling, except by an application to Mr. Montague for her fortune, which he told her he had repeatedly made, though Mr. Montague had returned no answer to his letters. That Sir Townly, enraged by this disregard of his applications, treated her with the greatest barbarity, refusing her permission to apply to her mother, and swearing that she should share the misery her father's injustice had occasioned : nor would he permit her out of his sight till this money was paid, when she might, with her infant child, go where she pleased ; adding, that her previous silence had been caused by Sir Townly, who had forbidden her writing to her mother, lest she might have informed her of his mode of living. That she had not ventured to disobey him, nor would she have done so now, was she not reduced to the want of every necessary for herself and her child, as Mrs. Talbot had refused the slightest assistance to Sir Townly : and he was so much afraid of being arrested for various debts he had contracted antecedent to his marriage, that he could not venture to leave their lodgings except in the dusk of the

evening. That she had taken advantage of one of his nocturnal absences to write to implore her pity and assistance ; and had concluded by saying she was in obscure lodgings in Jervis-street. Mrs. Montague then went on to say, that, such had been her horror on reading this letter, she had since been confined to her bed, from which she now wrote, to conjure Sidney to apply to Sedley, and ask his advice and assistance for her wretched child, as to Mr. Montague or Charles she had not ventured to apply, after the information Fanny had given her of Sir Townly's repeated applications for money, which neither had mentioned to her. On the Major's prudence and goodness of heart she said she could rely for his exertions to serve her unhappy daughter ; and should, as soon as she was able to leave her bed, remit him money to defray any expense he might in the interval incur ; though she would not delay a moment to ask his assistance. She concluded her letter by a pathetic supplication to Sidney to write as soon as possible, and give her every particular she could gather of the situation of her wretched child.

. Sidney's agitation on reading this letter became so violent, that, before she had concluded it, Sedley, starting from his seat, eagerly demanded what information Mrs. Montague could have given thus to affect her.

Sidney, bursting into tears, put the letter into his hand without speaking.

"What has happened, Mr. Sedley," exclaimed Elmore—"Is Charles?"—He stopped, not venturing to finish the question he had intended; as that Charles was dead was the first idea that occurred.

Mrs. Elmore, impressed with the same belief, hung over Sidney, endeavouring to soothe her, though her own tears flowed at witnessing her agitation; while Elmore eagerly watched Sedley's countenance as he perused the letter, and, in the expression of horror it betrayed, read the full confirmation of his fears.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the Major, the moment he had finished reading "what a fate has the wretched Fanny Beauchamp incurred!"

"Fanny Beauchamp!" repeated Elmore, relieved from his fears; "thank Heaven it is

no worse : I feared poor Charles was no more, and then indeed I should have felt for his family."

" Read that letter," cried Sedley, giving him Mrs. Montague's letter, " and you must then feel for his unhappy mother."

" Do not, my dearest love," continued he, taking Sidney's hand, " give way to such anguish. Dreadful as must be Fanny's present situation, it is scarcely worse than might have been apprehended from such a connexion. I will visit her, and will do all in my power to alleviate her sufferings. Do not, then, unnecessarily harass yourself : when I see Fanny I may, perhaps, be enabled to take some steps towards procuring a separation between her and that infamous Beauchamp ; and in my house she shall ever find a home."

" You are all that is good and kind," cried Sidney, endeavouring to restrain her tears ; " and there is no wish of yours I shall not anxiously study to fulfil. But, would not it be better to allow me first to see Fanny ? Emma will accompany me ; but, in such distress as she represents herself, it would, I fear,

be cruel for any, except a female and a relation, to intrude on her. You may, if you please, come with us ; but let me at least prepare her for seeing you."

" No," replied Sedley, with warmth, " to such a scene no consideration can tempt me to expose either you or Emma. To suffer you to run any risk of encountering Beauchamp, no feelings of compassion or tenderness for Fanny could induce me. Therefore, think no more of it ; but do you and Emma take a drive in the Park, and I will go to see Fanny, and trust to me for treating her with all the tenderness and delicacy you could desire."

Sidney, alarmed at the idea of a meeting between Sedley and Sir Townly, which, in her anxiety to relieve Fanny, had not till now occurred to her, could not suppress her apprehensions of the consequences that might ensue ; when Elmore, to calm her uneasiness, offered to accompany him ; but Sedley, smiling at her fears, assured her he had no intention of meeting Sir Townly, as his object was to obtain a private interview with Fanny, and learn all the particulars of her situation ; and that the in-

troduction of any third person, in her present circumstances, would be a want of delicacy.

Satisfied with this assurance, Sidney suffered him to depart.

On arriving at the house Mrs. Montague had named, Sedley begged to see the person to whom it belonged; and was shewn into a small back parlour, where he found a decent elderly-looking woman, who informed him her name was Davis, and that she was the person he had desired to see.

He then inquired if a lady of the name of Boyton (which Mrs. Montague had mentioned as that Sir Townly had assumed) did not lodge in her house, with her husband and an infant son?

“ She does, poor creature,” replied Mrs. Davis, with an accent and gesture of unaffected compassion ; “ and the Lord help her ! I am sure she has seen better days ; but it was her misfortune to meet with a bad husband, —a worse one never lived. Oh, sir, he is a perfect brute—drunk from the moment he opens his eyes till he shuts them again ; and no more feeling for her or her poor baby than

if they did not belong to him. Why, sir, he will curse them worse than you would curse your dog."

Sedley, was truly shocked at finding the Fanny Montague he had once remembered the possessor of such wealth, the object of such adulation, whose every whim was consulted, every wish prevented, and every look obeyed, now sunk into a state of such abject wretchedness as to be regarded as an object of compassion by the mistress of a mean lodging-house. But repressing his feelings, he announced himself as a friend of Mrs. Boyton's, who, as she justly remarked, had been once in a very different situation, and asked her if she would endeavour to prevail on Mrs. Boyton to come down to the parlour, as he was anxious to have some private conversation with her.

To execute this commission Mrs. Davis readily consented ; saying she was sure Mrs. Boyton would come down, as she had all the morning been expecting a letter from a lady to whom she had written, to beg she would intercede with her friends for her ; though Boyton was such a brute, that he would not

allow her to write, which she had persuaded her to do unknown to him ; adding, “ You have just come in time, sir ; she could not have held out much longer ; and, though she is a stranger to me, my heart aches for her. Oh, sir, it is a sad thing to hear one’s child crying for hunger, and wot have it in the world to give it ; and to see one’s husband all the while spending every penny in drinking, and not caring if you were starved.”

“ Good Heavens !” thought Sedley, “ can Fanny Montague have been reduced to this ? ” But, without making any remark on her information, he merely begged of Mrs. Davis to hasten with his message to Mrs. Boyton.

She then relieved him by her departure, as her remarks had given him a degree of pain for which not even her goodnature could atone ; but he was extremely pleased that Fanny had so cautiously concealed her name and family, as he could not brook the idea of having it publicly known that a daughter of Mr. Montague’s had been reduced to such an extremity of distress.

In a few moments the door opened, and

Lady Beauchamp appeared, but not the Lady Beauchamp whom Sedley could have recognised. She was thin even to emaciation ; her eyes sunk and languid, though betraying an expression of fear and despair ; and her dress wretched and slovenly beyond that of the commonest servant.

On entering the room she cast a fearful glance around, as if dreading whom she might behold ; but, on seeing the Major, all caution forsook her ; and, uttering a faint cry, she exclaimed, “ Oh, Sedley ! is it you ? ” and would have sunk to the ground, had he not darting forward, caught her in his arms, and supported her to a seat ; when, laying her head on his bosom, she sobbed for some moments with convulsive violence, and then burst into a torrent of tears.

Scarcely could Sedley repress his as he hung in silence over her ; but, recovering his fortitude, which for the moment had sunk under the shock which not even Mrs. Montague’s letter had taught him to expect, he endeavoured to console her—telling her he had come at Mrs. Montague’s express desire

to see her, who, with Sidney and himself, would take every pains to sooth and assist her. " Endeavour, then," cried he tenderly, " to conquer your feelings, and inform me of your situation, that I may instantly set about removing you from such a scene."

" And does my mother yet care for me?" cried Lady Beauchamp, sobbing violently; " can you speak so kindly to me?" " Oh, continued she, shuddering, " you know not what I have suffered—But hush!—is that Townly's voice?—If he heard me—if he saw me speak to you—he would—I believe he would murder me."

" Curse on the wretch," cried Sedley, with ungoverned emotion, " think not of him;—trust to me for protection—and tell me why I see you in such a state."

" I cannot tell you now," cried she; " my poor Orby might awake—he has not any person to take care of him—and should he cry, and disturb Townly—Oh, let me away," continued she, trying to break from the Major, " I am afraid to wait longer."

Sedley, shocked beyond expression at her

fears and her calamities, and by the information thus conveyed, that she had not even a single attendant, entreated she would remain a few moments longer, as the servant of the house might take care of the child.

"I cannot pay her," replied Fanny in a low voice; "I had not this morning as much money as would procure him some milk till Mrs. Davis supplied me."

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed Sedley, "is this possible?" Then, checking himself, added, "You shall not again feel such a want—your mother has sent you an ample supply."

Then, calling the servant, he desired her to go and sit with Mrs. Boyton's child till her return; and, again approaching Fanny, entreated she would leave Sir Townly, and put herself under his protection. "I will call a carriage this moment," continued he, "and take you and your child for ever from such a scene. Sidney is in town, and will be delighted to see you."

"Oh, no, no," replied she, "I dare not leave Townly; for though he has not been able to raise a shilling, except by the sale of my

clothes, the last of which are now gone, and what money he did procure he instantly spent in intoxication, yet I dare not leave him : he says he will murder me if I attempt it ; and go I cannot till my father pays the remainder of my fortune. I beseech you, ask him to do so, and let me then quit this place—let me again see mamma :—in my nurse's cottage I should now be happy."

" Come with me now, then," cried the Major ; " I will take your child with you, and let Beauchamp at his peril come near my house."

Fanny hesitated, and Sedley was leaving the room to send for a carriage, when, hearing her child cry, Fanny was flying past him ; but, stopping her, he exclaimed, " Do not leave me, Fanny ; depend on my protection."

" Let me go—let me go," cried she, wildly, and trembling with terror ; " if Townly hears Orby—if he disturbs him——"

She could say no more, but again endeavoured to force away. Sedley, fearful of attracting the attention of the other lodgers, should he attempt to take Fanny forcibly

away, thought it better to allow her to leave him, after putting into her hand a twenty-pound bank-note.

Fanny, without uttering a word, again burst into tears, and flew up stairs, from whence the Major heard the furious voice of Sir Townly uttering the most horrid imprecations. Roused to rage, Sedley half-ascedped the stairs, with an intention of taking Fanny and her infant from Sir Townly ; but, hearing the loud laugh of savage riot burst from the room from whence the voice proceeded, he stopped, to inquire from a servant coming down stairs, who was with Sir Townly ?

Two or three gentlemen of his acquaintance, she said, who had come to see him, and brought him a present of brandy, over which they were making merry ; adding, that Mrs. Boyton and the child had gone into an inner apartment.

Convinced by this information of the inutility of such an attempt at present, which would merely engage him in fruitless contention with a set of ruffians, the very outcast of society, Sedley returned to Mrs Davis's parlour ; and, thanking her for her kindness to the

lady who had just left, him, entreated she would continue to pay her every attention, and procure her the attendance of a servant till he came again, for which purpose he presented her with a very ample fund, and took his leave, followed by thanks and blessings from Mrs. Davis, who had little expected so liberal a return for kindness she had bestowed from genuine charity.

On reaching home, Major Sedley consulted with Captain Elmore by what means he could deliver Fanny from Sir Townly, and mentioning, without reserve, the scene he had just witnessed.

Shocked by the narrative, Elmore hesitated what advice to give; but at length proposed that he should write to Mr. Montague, and entreat that he would immediately come to town, and endeavour, to make such a compromise with Sir Townly, as would induce him to relinquish all farther claim over his wife and child.

This advice Sedley followed, giving Mr. Montague a touching detail of his daughter's deplorable situation, and mentioning the plan

he had formed to rescue her from such complicated scenes of vice and wretchedness, he entreated that he would come immediately to town and assist him with his advice ; as he could not a moment doubt that he would lose all remembrance of Lady Beauchamp's misconduct in pity for her present sufferings.

To Mrs. Montague he also wrote a short, but soothing and affectionate letter, telling her he had seen her daughter, and given her every consolation in his power; that he would use every exertion to procure her separation from Sir Townly, and would very soon give her farther intelligence. He forbore to mention his application to Mr. Montague, unwilling to raise hopes that might be disappointed, after Fanny's conduct and that of Sir Townly, as he could not too positively rely on his compliance with that request.

Scarcely had he finished writing, when Sidney, who had been out with Mrs. Elmore, returned, and eagerly demanded an account of his interview with Fanny.

"It was not such," cried he, "as you could wish to hear : Fanny has but too severely ex-

piated her misconduct ; but do not, my dearest Sidney, inquire into particulars ; suffice it to say I have given her every present assistance, and will make the most vigorous exertions to procure a separation between her and the ruffian she has so unfortunately married. I earnestly hope I shall, in a few days, be enabled to place her under your care, and do not in the interim dwell on the subject, but trust implicitly to me."

Sidney instantly complied with a request dictated by prudence and tenderness, and raised her heart in grateful adoration to Heaven for the peculiar felicity of her own lot ; feeling mingled pride and rapture in the idea that the chosen object of her affections, had proved not only the first of blessings to herself, but in a lesser degree conferred happiness on every branch of her family, that either deserved or stood in need of his good offices.

As all farther proceedings respecting Lady Beauchamp were suspended till Sedley should hear from Mr. Montague, and learn his intentions, he merely sent her a farther supply of

money, enclosed in a letter, which he forwarded by his own servant, in which he informed her of his having written to her father, and that he would, as soon as he had received his answer, set about the necessary measures to procure her separation from Sir Townly ; advising her to keep his intentions a profound secret from him, and, as far as she could, to avoid his society for the few intervening days. He also requested that she would send him an account of Sir Townly's debts in Dublin ; for he was extremely anxious to have such a tie over him as this information would afford, though he prudently forbore to mention his reasons to Fanny.

In a few hours the servant returned, bringing an answer from Lady Beauchamp, scarcely legible from haste and agitation, and nearly blotted with her tears. It informed him of the names and residence of Sir Townly's principal creditors in Dublin : to thank him for his kindness she said she could not, as she was conscious how little she deserved from him, but would implicitly follow his advice respecting Sir Townly, who lived in a state of

such constant intoxication with the money she had given him, that he neither could nor cared to inquire how she obtained it.

On the third evening after Major Sedley had despatched his letter to Mr. Montague, as he and his family were at tea, Mr. Montague and Charles entered the room, pale with fatigue and vexation.

Overpowered by their unexpected appearance, and by their look and manner, Sidney, bursting into tears, kissed them in silence. Mr. Montague held her for a moment to his bosom in speechless agitation, while Charles turned away to conceal his emotion.

Quickly recovering some command of his feelings, Mr. Montague endeavoured to speak to Sedley and Elmore as usual, and to reply to their expressions of pleasure at seeing him; but, Charles little accustomed to disguise or control his feelings among his own family, threw himself on a sofa, and, complaining of fatigue, refused Sidney's entreaties to partake of some refreshment.

Sidney perceived that Mr. Montague, though preserving more self-possession was not

less harassed than his son ; and learning that they had travelled from Belle Vue without any greater delay than merely to change horses, from anxiety to return to Mrs. Montague, who was confined to her bed extremely ill, she left the room, accompanied by Mrs. Elmore, in order to allow them some private conversation with Sedley, previous to their retiring to repose after such unusual fatigue.

The moment they were gone, Mr. Montague said that he never had received such a shock as his letter and that from Fanny, to Mrs. Montague had given him ; and begged of Sedley to explain what were the measures he intended to pursue to rescue his wretched daughter from the misery in which she had involved herself.

Anxious to excite Mr. Montague's pity for his unhappy child, and thus to induce a wish to see and console her, Sedley related without palliation the circumstances which he had witnessed. Scarcely had he proceeded half-way in his narration, when Charles, starting from the sofa, exclaimed, with a look and voice of fury, that Fanny should not remain another hour

under the roof with that infamous ruffian, and, snatching up his hat, was quitting the room, when Mr. Montague, seized his arm, and the Major earnestly declaring that violence and precipitation would merely serve to destroy Lady Beauchamp, and compromise himself in scenes of which he was little aware, he at length consented to listen to Sedley's plan, and again threw himself in sullen silence on the sofa.

Major Sedley then proceeded to state the plan which he and Captain Elmore had formed; which was, to have articles of separation drawn up between Sir Townly and Lady Beauchamp, obliging Sir Townly, under a heavy penalty, to give up his son wholly to his wife's care: and on condition of his complying with this proposal, to give him a sum of money that would enable him to leave the kingdom. If he refused his consent, it would be easy to have him arrested by some of his creditors, who were on the watch for him, and thus, at all events, to rescue the unfortunate Fanny from his tyranny and brutality. To prevail on Sir Townly to agree to a separation, he said

he should infinitely prefer ; but no means should be left untried to emancipate the unhappy victim of his cruelty and atrocity from his future power.

" I will agree to any thing," cried Mr. Montague, in an inward and subdued voice, " except to see the wretch who has behaved so basely to my child. I will readily give up her fortune to redeem her, but the sight of him I could not endure : his very name is destruction to me."

" Well then, sir," cried Sedley, eagerly, " we will speak no more of him ; I will, to the best of my abilities, transact the business, and with Elmore's assistance, we may hope in a few days to have Lady Beauchamp freed from further persecution ; but this I cannot undertake if Charles does not promise to forbear interfering. He surely ought not to appear in such a business, and Sir Townly's lodgings I never will enter along with him."

" With pleasure will I give every assistance in my power," exclaimed Captain Elmore, " but it must be on the same conditions : nothing shall compel me to be witness of an interview

between Montague and such an abandoned ruffian as Beauchamp."

" And is such an abandoned ruffian," cried Charles, in a voice almost choked with passion, " to escape unpunished? Are Fanny Montague's injuries to be left unrevenged by her brother?"

" Her brother, nor no human being, can avenge her injuries," replied Sedley; " to alleviate them is all we can attempt. Let me ask you, Charles, would you degrade yourself to a level with such an outcast of society? would you endeavour to overpower him with superior force?—What is it you propose?"

" I know not," said Charles, passionately; " I believe you are right, but never let me again hear his name mentioned."

With this declaration Sedley was satisfied; and, leaving Mr. Montague and Charles to seek that repose which their uncommon fatigue rendered so necessary, he went with Elmore to his lawyer's, to have the proper papers prepared.

Such was their diligence, and the expedition used by the agents they employed, that the articles of separation, framed as Sedley had

directed, were, in the course of the following day, properly drawn up, and put into his possession.

On the ensuing morning, therefore, Major Sedley, accompanied by Captain Elmore, and attended by two servants, were setting out for Sir Townly's lodgings, when Sidney asked if some person should not go with him in the carriage, to return with Lady Beauchamp, and take care of her child, as he had resolved not to return without them.

Mrs. Elmore immediately proposed to accompany them, and to remain in the carriage till Lady Beauchamp was given into her care; but Captain Elmore declaring he could not consent to her taking a step, which might expose her to the possibility of encountering such a scene as was likely to ensue, she gave up the point, and Sidney sent her own woman, in whose care and prudence she placed the utmost reliance.

On arriving at Sir Townly's lodgings, Sedley stationed the two servants, on whose courage he could depend, at the bottom of the stairs, and, accompanied by Elmore, proceeded to Sir

Townly's apartment; requesting Elmore to wait in the passage till he had prepared Fanny for the meeting, he went in alone, and for a moment felt every other sensation lost in wonder and disgust at the scene presented to his view.

At a small table, stopped over with various sorts of liquors, sat Sir Townly, his hat on, his clothes torn and dirty, his countenance exhibiting the most disgusting expression of bloated drunkenness, and swallowing raw brandy with a man apparently of the very lowest order.

Several chairs, and other articles of furniture, of the most wretched description, lay scattered round the room; in a remote corner sat Lady Beauchamp, bending over an infant of about four months old, who lay sleeping in her arms, insensible of the noise of his abandoned father, and his no less profligate associate.

On seeing Major Sedley enter, Sir Townly and his companion ceased their riotous mirth, and Sir Townly for a moment appeared con-

founded ; but, quickly recovering from feelings now so new to him, he asked Sedley what brought him there : did he come from curiosity ? or with proposals from Mr. Montague of paying the remainder of his daughter's fortune, adding, with an oath, that, if he did not, he had better leave the room that moment, as they had no desire for his company.

" As little, sir," cried Sedley, sternly, " do I desire yours. I am come on no idle embassy ; I am here, sir, to demand that you restore Lady Beauchamp to her friends, and on this condition alone am I empowered to treat with you."

" If Mr. Montague pays down the 5000*l.* " replied Sir Townly, eyeing him with a look of insolent defiance, " Lady Beauchamp and her brat may go and be d—d, for what I care ; but on no other condition shall she leave me : do you hear ?" continued he, addressing Fanny ; " go into that room" pointing to an inner one ; " if your father is rascal enough to cheat me, you shall suffer for it."

Lady Beauchamp rose and retired, casting a look of such despairing terror at Sedley as

made him thrill with indignation, though he did not oppose her departure; but, calling in Captain Elmore, he went forward to the table, and, unfolding the papers, read aloud the articles of separation, and the bond binding Sir Townly, under a heavy penalty, to permit his son to reside entirely with Lady Beauchamp, and to be educated by her.

Sir Townly listened in silence, frequently smiling with a savage expression of derision; and, when Major Sedley had ceased reading, declared that Lady Beauchamp and her son might go where and when she pleased, if he got the money from Mr. Montague. In this case he would sign that moment—the money was all he wanted;—if he got that, he should be happy to be rid of such plagues; but, otherwise, they might be starved before they should leave him. Major Sedley would find himself mistaken in supposing that he could awe him into compliance by bringing his friend with him:—if they came to blows, they should find they had to deal with those who were fully their match.

Major Sedley, finding Sir Townly as utterly

lost to the common feelings of shame and humanity as he had long been to those of honour, hesitated what reply to make, feeling a degree of indignation he could neither subdue nor repress.

Captain Elmore, looking sternly at Sir Townly, exclaimed, “We have not come here unprepared, sir;—you had better, therefore, beware of what you say, or of what answer you give to Major Sedley’s proposals; for, if you again address such language to either of us, or utter another reflection against Mr. Montague’s family, you shall,” added he, with an oath he could not restrain, “meet the punishment you deserve.”

“ Better hear what the gentlemen have to say for themselves,” cried the man, who had hitherto sat silent. “ What is the use of going to fight for nothing;—better try if they will give you the cash before you go to affront them.”

Then, filling out a glass of brandy, he first offered it to Major Sedley, considering him of most consequence; and, on his declining it, presented it to Captain Elmore. On meeting

a refusal from him also, he swallowed it himself, saying, with a loud laugh, “he was no such fool as to suffer good liquor to go a begging.”

Shocked and disgusted, Sedley, in a few words, informed Sir Townly, that, if he signed the paper he had read to him, he would immediately give him the sum of 500*l.*, to enable him to leave the kingdom.

Sir Townly refused, saying he would not sign the papers unless he received the full sum of 5000*l.*

“ You had better take care how you refuse,” said Sedley: “ You deserve no mercy, and you shall meet none. If you do not accept the terms I propose, and sign the papers, you will be arrested at the suit of —— the coach-maker, to whom you owe 500*l.* I am determined, sir,” continued he, seeing Sir Townly laugh.—“ Elmore, will you call to Murray : he knows what to do.”

On hearing Major Sedley utter these words, and seeing Captain Elmore approach the door, Sir Townly caught up a poker lying beside him, and aimed a blow at Sedley’s head, who,

starting aside, avoided the stroke ; and, drawing his sword, exclaimed, “ Advance a single step, and you shall this moment meet the fate you deserve.”

Captain Elmore returning to the room, accompanied by Murray, Sir Townly cast himself in sullen silence into a seat, when his companion urgently advised him to take the money :—the gentlemen were not to be tricked nor frightened, and any thing was better than to be nabbed, as he knew he had no chance of ever getting free.

While the man was speaking, Major Sedley desired Murray to order the carriage to draw up, and then return to wait his farther commands ; when, again, addressing Sir Townly, he said, “ Lady Beauchamp, sir, I will take away without your permission ; I am prepared for any resistance and no opposition will avail. Since you have refused my offer, you must only abide the consequences.”

Sir Townly, finding he had no longer the weak helpless Fanny to contend with, but those equally able and willing to force his compliance or punish his refusal, thought it

better to yield, since his farther obstinacy would injure none but himself; he therefore muttered his willingness to sign the papers, on condition of receiving the money Major Sedley had offered, and called to Lady Beauchamp, in a loud and furious voice, instantly to come forth.

This call Lady Beauchamp promptly obeyed; but, overpowered with terror at witnessing the fury of that countenance which had so often appalled her, and at seeing Major Sedley and Captain Elmore with their swords drawn, she would have sunk to the ground had not Sedley ran to her assistance; while Elmore gazed at her with sensations of pity and horror, struck, as Sedley had been, with the melancholy difference between her and the Fanny he had once remembered.

Sir Townly's companion procuring pen and ink, Sedley supported Lady Beauchamp; while, with helpless terror, she suffered Elmore to guide her hand, for the purpose of signing her name to the articles of separation.

Captain Elmore then, taking her from the Major, was proceeding to carry her down stairs

to the carriage, when she called out, in a voice of agony, “ Oh, where is Orby?—surely you will not leave my child to be murdered !”

On hearing her voice Sir Townly gave utterance to his rage in a volley of horrible imprecations against her, till compelled to silence by Sedley, who calling out, “ Go on, Elmore, and I will send the child by Murray,” proceeded into the inner room, equally mean and miserable with the other.

The infant, who was lying asleep, awoke on Sedley’s taking him in his arms ; and, observing the countenance of a total stranger, burst into a loud and terrified cry. Sir Townly, with reiterated fury, denounced the same horrid curses against his child which he had the moment before vented on its unfortunate mother.

Shocked beyond expression by the whole scene, Sedley made no farther effort to check Sir Townly ; but, giving the child to Murray, told him to hasten down to Lady Beauchamp, and attend her home.

On Captain Elmore’s return to the room, Sir Townly signed the papers, which his com-

panion, by his desire, witnessed ; as did also Elmore. Major Sedley, giving him the *500l.*, told him he had nothing farther to hope or expect from Mr. Montague, and quitted the room, accompanied by Elmore ; each feeling a sensation of the purest pleasure at having so happily accomplished Lady Beauchamp's liberation.

As the coachman, by his master's orders had driven slowly, they overtook the carriage as it reached the house ; and Sedley, lifting the almost lifeless Fanny in his arms, carried her into one of the lower rooms to procure her some refreshment, while Captain Elmore went up stairs, not choosing to be present at the first meeting of the unfortunate Lady Beauchamp and her family.

On hearing of her arrival, Mr. Montague hurried down to meet his daughter, and to assure her of his forgiveness ; but, transfixed with horror by the emaciated object that was presented to his view, he turned from her in silence, unable to approach, or even to articulate.

Charles and Sidney, having followed Mr.

Montague, stood for some moments contemplating the wretched, the altered Fanny, who still lay nearly insensible. Sidney, recovering more presence of mind, and unwilling to have her woman a witness of such a scene, told her to retire with the infant, who, overcome by the many strange faces that surrounded him, and not seeing his mother, whom alone in the world he knew, had laid his head in still silence on the woman's shoulder.

Fanny, at length opening her eyes, and raising her head, caught a glimpse of her father, when, springing forward, and throwing her arms round him, she buried her head in his bosom, and burst into a flood of tears. Charles, gazed at her with mingled feelings of pity and indignation, and with frantic violence denounced vengeance against Sir Townly, swearing that no consideration should withhold him from avenging the injuries of his wretched sister, for the first time so forcibly represented to his imagination by the awful change in that once sprightly countenance, on which no other expression now appeared but that of phrensic terror and heart-broken despair.

Alarmed by Charles's vehemence, and anxious to remove Fanny from his sight, Sidney earnestly entreated that she would suffer Sedley to assist her to the apartment prepared for her, and endeavour to compose her spirits.

"Oh, no, no," cried the weeping Fanny, in a faint voice, "I will not quit my father: I am safe with him; and I never—never have been safe or happy since I left him."

"Take her—take her—Sedley," exclaimed Mr. Montague, in extreme agitation; "neither she nor I can longer support this. To what has that pernicious villain reduced my child!"

Sedley, approaching, endeavoured to disengage Fanny from Mr. Montague; but, for the first time for many months, experiencing a feeling of security in her father's arms, she clung to his breast, resisting all Sedley's efforts and entreaties—and even Mr. Montague, though imploring Sedley to lead her away, pressed her to his heart with a convulsive grasp.

The sight of his sister's helpless wretchedness, and of his father's distracted feelings, calming the frantic violence of Charles, he went to her, and, gently taking her hand,

while the tears he could not restrain forced their way down his cheeks, exclaimed, "Fanny, let us forget the past. Come with me—trust to me: in my arms—you will be safer—and still under the protection of your father."

"And will you allow me to see mamma, Charles?" cried Fanny, softly; "Would to God that I had never left her!"

"You shall see her," cried he, tenderly: "you shall live at Belle Vue, as formerly; and the past will be buried in oblivion."

Soothed by this promise, Fanny no longer refused to leave her father; and, folding her arms round Charles, she suffered him to carry her in unresisting silence to her room, followed by Sidney.

The infant son of Lady Beauchamp, whom Sidney's woman had brought into her apartment, on catching a glimpse of his mother, uttered a cry of joy, endeavouring to force himself out of the woman's arms. Roused by his voice, Lady Beauchamp raised her head, and held out her arms to take him.

"Is that Sir Townly Beauchamp's child?" cried Charles, with a sudden change of counte-

nance : “ take him away ; I cannot bear him in my sight.”

“ He is Fanny’s child, Charles,” said Sidney ; “ an innocent helpless babe—and as such you will pity and protect him.”

Charles was silent. The indignation he felt at Sir Townly was too keen to permit him to conquer the disgust it gave him to his child ; and, unwilling to express, yet unable to subdue his emotion, he quitted the room.

Lady Beauchamp falling into a state of almost total stupefaction, and appearing insensible to all surrounding objects, Sidney prevailed on her to retire to bed, by the side of which she sat till she dropped asleep ; when, consigning her to the care of her woman, she left her to enjoy that repose her shattered nerves so greatly required.

Mr. Montague continued in a state of such extreme agitation, after Lady Beauchamp’s departure from the room, that Sedley, unwilling to appear to notice him, stood silent at a window till Charles returned, when he put into his hand the papers containing Sir Townly’s absolute renunciation of all farther power over

his wife and child, together with his acknowledgment for the sum of 500*l.*

“ This business is now finally settled, my dear Charles,” cried he; “ Lady Beauchamp and her son are for ever rescued from Sir Townly’s tyranny;—drive him, if possible, from your thoughts.”

“ What is Beauchamp’s son to me?” replied Charles, angrily; “ I care not what becomes of him.”

• “ Your feelings at present must be indeed severe,” said Sedley, mildly; “ but consider, Charles, the child is also your sister’s and of course your nephew; • and, as such, he should be educated with sentiments and principles worthy of your relation, and suitable to the fortune he must one day inherit, and of which his father’s vice and profligacy cannot bereave him. You will be sensible of all this when your present feelings have a little subsided. You are too generous, too noble-minded, to punish an unoffending infant for the faults of an abandoned father; and in you Lady Beauchamp’s son will ever find a friend and guardian. I know you too well to doubt it.”

Charles felt the justice of the Major's statement ; but, unable to conquer his disgust to whatever reminded him of the destroyer of his unhappy sister, he made no reply.

" I cannot thank you, Sedley," exclaimed Mr. Montague, with great emotion. " Oh ! would to God you had been my son ; but no," continued he, after a moment's pause, " Fanny did not deserve you :—you have much more happily, much more wisely chosen ; and I trust that Sidney has proved a recompense for the various vexations and perplexities in which her unprincipled relations have involved you. I did once think," added he, in a faltering voice, " that no daughter of mine would have plunged you, or your generous friend into such scenes as you have this day encountered."

" There is no difficulty, sir," said Sedley warmly, " that Elmore and myself would not encounter to serve a child of your's. Never did I enjoy real felicity till the period that united me to my beloved Sidney, whose every thought is invariably directed to promote my happiness. Whatever uneasiness I may have

suffered through the ill conduct of the Hamiltons, to you or your family I owe nothing but affection and gratitude. But let us, my dear sir, wave all farther mention of the subject: Lady Beauchamp has suffered severely; but, in your protection and her brother's, I trust she will receive and diffuse consolation; or, should you for the present prefer leaving her under my care, from Sidney, from myself, and all my family, she shall meet the same tenderness and attention as if she was my sister."

"I thank you, from my soul I thank you," replied Mr. Montague; "but, since Fanny has so severely expiated her disobedience, and is so anxious to return to the home and protection she was so weakly and perversely determined to quit, I will not again part with her. As soon as she is able to travel, I shall take her with me to Belle Vue, where her poor mother will receive her with tenderness and pleasure. Ill as I can endure that the child of such a ruffian should reside under my roof, yet, he is Fanny's, and as such he shall be treated; on Sidney I must rely for providing him with suitable attendants, and what-

ever else he may require ; and also for enabling my unfortunate daughter to appear in a suitable manner. Oh, Sedley ! to see my daughter reduced to such a state—degraded to an object of compassion—broken in health—and sunk in her own estimation !”

Major Sedley took the bank-notes which Mr. Montague put into his hand for the above-mentioned purpose, and gently interrupting him, proposed their joining the remainder of the family.

Late in the evening Lady Beauchamp awoke, something refreshed by the first undisturbed sleep she had for many weeks enjoyed. On learning from her woman that she was awake, Sidney went to sit with her ; and perceiving, by her look of perplexity and astonishment, that she but imperfectly remembered the transactions of the day, she gradually recalled them to her mind, and tenderly congratulated her on being for ever released from Sir Townly’s tyranny.

“ And has Townly consented to my leaving him,” cried Fanny ? “ He said he never would.

He swore he would murder me if I attempted it, till my father paid him the remainder of my fortune. Has my poor father done this? Oh," continued she, bursting into tears, "he has been avenged for all my misconduct."

" He forgives it all, my dear Fanny," said Sidney; " so does Charles"; they have no wish but to make you happy: in their's and my aunt's kindness you will, I hope, find consolation."

" And what is to become of my infant," cried Fanny; " the poor babe I have with difficulty preserved from perishing with want, or being destroyed by his cruel father? Sidney, you know not what I have suffered: every guinea of my fortune has been long since spent; every article of my clothes and trinkets sold to procure food; and, when all was gone, had it not been for the charity of Mrs. Davis, my poor babe must have perished. Oh Sidney, I cannot part with him; and, if my father will not permit me to keep him, I cannot go to Belle Vue: though where on earth can I now retire, as, after urging me into all my ill-conduct, Mrs. Talbot refused me permission to enter her house.

Sidney, though shocked beyond expression at these details which Sedley had carefully withheld, endeavoured to tranquillize Fanny by mentioning Mr. Montague's declaration that she should reside at Bell Vue as formerly, and that as his child would he consider hers, having already given orders that the boy should be provided with every appointment befitting his grandchild.

"I do not deserve such kindness," said Fanny, weeping bitterly. "Oh how little did I know the character of the man for whom I left my father! I could not believe what Charles told me, and what was indeed but too true; but I have suffered for my folly; I have been reduced to abject want, and kept in continual terror for my own life, and that of my poor babe."

Sidney tried to console her, though she could not forbear mingling her tears with hers; and having at length succeeded in calming her emotion, and prevailing on her to take some refreshment, Fanny expressed a wish to relate all that had occurred since her leaving Ireland, in order to account for her long silence

and present situation, requesting that Sidney would mention the particulars to her father and to Charles, to convince them she had not wilfully neglected her mother. Sidney thinking it better to indulge her, and thus prevent any farther necessity for recurring to the subject, she gave her the following narration :—

Immediately after their going to England, Sir Townly had gone to Bath, and from thence to various other watering places, mixing in every species of dissipation which they afforded ; but his character was well known, and as she soon became convinced of his profligacy, and of the infamy attached to his name, he forbade her to write to her mother, lest she might be informed of those particulars, and from thence, perhaps, induced to make some effort to rescue her from his power. For his marriage concluded, as it was supposed with the approbation of her friends, had considerably increased his credit in England, and he did not choose to lose any share of the advantage he had thus acquired, by any interference on the part of her family. As she was too much terrified to refuse compliance with

any of his wishes, she had implicitly acquiesced in these commands.

In the beginning of winter, Sir Townly had returned to London, and taken a ready-furnished house, in which he lived for some months with splendour; but she had passed her time in total seclusion from the world, as none but young men of the most dissolute character and abandoned principles visited at the house; nor had Sir Townly sought to introduce her to any other society.

His creditors, who had for some time been kept quiet by promises of immediate payment, at length became so urgent in their demands, that he was compelled to give the rents of his estate into their hands: he then laid down his carriage, and taking refuge in an obscure part of the city, to avoid the farther persecutions of his still unsatisfied creditors, he depended entirely on the gambling-table for subsistence, at which he had already dissipated the principal part of his fortune.

In this situation Fanny had been confined of her son, attended only by one female servant, and without medical assistance. But what was

far more dreadful,—continually exposed to the horrors of Sir Townly's fits of drunken rage, as, from the time he had been compelled to relinquish the style of life to which he had been accustomed, he resigned himself to continual intoxication ; and, as Mr. Montague had not taken any notice of his repeated applications for the remainder of her fortune, he had constantly wreaked his rage on her, saying she should share the misery her father's injustice had occasioned, and that she never should leave him till he received the money. He even swore, that, should she attempt it, not only her own life, but that of her child, should fall the sacrifice of his wrath, as he still hoped, through her means, to terrify Mr. Montague into compliance with his demands. Awed by his manners, and reduced to the most helpless and forlorn state of despair, she had submitted in silence to his refusal of permitting her to return with her child to Ireland.

Such was the situation of their affairs, when one evening, that Sir Townly had raised a sum of money by disposing of all her valuable trinkets, he set out to a gambling-house in

the neighbourhood, and being there detected in an attempt to defraud a gentleman of a large sum, he had received the chastisement he deserved ; and the affair becoming public, his enraged creditors had taken such active measures to discover his abode, that he would have been arrested, had not a gentleman, who formerly visited at his house, and was rather less abandoned than the rest of his associates, in pity to Lady Beauchamp warned him to make his escape ; too ignorant of the real circumstances of her situation, to be aware that no event could have been more fortunate for her than an arrest, which would have freed her from his power.

In consequence of this warning, Sir Townly had made his escape, determined to return to Ireland, and make a final effort to procure the 5000*l.* from Mr. Montague; but, as he had not more money than was sufficient to defray the expenses of their journey, on their landing in Dublin, he had gone in disguise to Mrs. Talbot's, to solicit her assistance and permission to secret himself, and his family, at her house till he could make some terms with Mr. Montague.

Enraged at the fruitless pains she had taken to rescue him from destruction, even at the expense of her own integrity, Mrs. Talbot refused his request with disdain, upbraided him severely, and in his presence gave orders to her servants never again to admit him to her house.

All hope from Mrs. Talbot being thus at an end, and compelled alike to study economy and secrecy, they retired to the obscure lodgings in which Major Sedley had found them, from whence Sir Townly had written to Mr. Montague, declaring his situation, and, that if he did not relieve him, his daughter should pay the penalty of his refusal. He desired his answer might be directed to the General Post-Office, dreading to discover his abode, lest Mr. Montague might inform his creditors of it, to prevent which he also renewed his prohibition of Fanny's writing to her mother.

For daily subsistence they were obliged to depend on the sale of Fanny's clothes, of which Mrs. Davis disposed; Sir Townly taking little other sustenance than raw brandy, which by degrees roused him to such a height

of madness, that Fanny every moment apprehended the next might witness either her own murder or that of her infant, as he was excited to fury by every cry which neglect or want compelled the poor babe to utter.

Such was her situation, when Mrs. Davis, seeing all her clothes gone, and judging from them and from her manner, however disguised and altered, that she must have originally moved in some higher sphere of life, at length prevailed on her to apply to her friends unknown to Sir Townly. Reduced to absolute despair, she had brayed all dread of him, and yielded to her advice; though concealing that it was to her mother that she had applied.

Such was the recital, comprising many more minute circumstances which Lady Beauchamp gave to Sidney, who listened to her with various emotions of wonder, pity, and disgust. After promising to relate the particulars as she desired to Mr. Montague and Charles, and endeavouring to reanimate her exhausted spirits, she again left her to repose.

CHAP. XVII.

THE next morning Sidney related to Mr. Montague and Charles all the circumstances which Fanny had on the preceding evening communicated; and, though both felt the utmost indignation, they declared their resentment to Fanny at an end; and that, since her child could never be claimed by Sir Townly, as her's would they consider and educate him. They desired her to tell Fanny it was their wish to have all past transactions buried in oblivion, and that they would meet her as if nothing distressing had occurred, as soon as she was sufficiently recovered to appear in the drawing-room.

This welcome intelligence Sidney conveyed to Fanny, and for the moment it appeared to revive her; but, such had been the constant terror in which she had for months lived, that, the instant she felt herself in peace and secu-

rity, her spirits sunk to a state of the most pitiable dejection. Such was the habitual fear impressed on her mind of violence, want, and wretchedness, from the late scenes of vice and misery to which she had been exposed, that she started at every noise, terrified lest it should announce the approach of a bailiff, or, what she infinitely more dreaded, that of Sir Townly Beauchamp; and seemed to derive no satisfaction from any circumstance but the rapid improvement of her little Orby, in consequence of the proper care and attention he received.

As Mr. Montague was anxious to return to Belle Vue, to afford Mrs. Montague the consolation of his society, he left town the morning after Fanny's arrival at Major Sedley's, Charles remaining in Dublin to escort his sister as soon as she was able to travel, and that the necessary preparations were completed for her appearing with propriety amidst her former acquaintance.

All the natural softness of Charles's disposition, awakened by seeing the once proud, capricious, and self-willed Fanny so humbled

and subdued, he treated her with the gentlest tenderness ; and, observing her intense anxiety that he should take notice of her little boy, though not venturing to hint her wishes, the disgust he could not at first conquer to the innocent babe at length subsiding, he afforded Fanny the truest consolation she had yet experienced by occasionally caressing him.

On being provided with suitable attendants for herself and child, and enabled to resume her former style of dress, Lady Beauchamp consented to mix with the family ; though the sight of Major Sedley and Captain Elmore always gave her pain, from a recollection of the unamiable colours in which she had appeared to them, and a sensation of shame at the degraded state from which they had rescued her.

As she was extremely anxious to see her mother, as soon as the necessary preparations were completed, Charles set out with her for Belle Vue, after exacting a promise from Sidney and the Major to follow him as soon as they had settled their affairs ; and also including Mr. and Mrs. Elmore in his invitation.

A short time after their departure from town, Major Sedley was formally put in possession of the long-contested estate of Wood-Lawn, together with the accumulated rents of the years it had been out of Mr. Montague's possession, which enabled him to discharge his debts to his uncle, and every other expense which he had incurred. He then set out with Sidney for Belle Vue, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Elmore.

The enormous expenses in which the contest for Wood-Lawn had involved Mr. Hamilton, together with his passion for gambling, had so completely deranged his affairs, that the creditors, unable either to procure payment of their debts, or any rational security that they ever would be paid, at length arrested, and threw him into confinement.

Left, in the disgraceful solitude of a prison, to reflect on the past for the first time in his life, he felt how little he had gained by quitting the straight road of honour and integrity; and, in the first feelings of compunction and despair, wrote to his mother, imploring her assistance to rescue him from confinement,

and enable him to make some effort to retrieve his ruined affairs.

Mrs. Hamilton's rage at discovering the extent of her son's debts, and the vast sums he had expended in gambling, was unbounded. With acrimony and reproaches she refused his request, telling him to bear the fate he had so well merited.

Happily for Hamilton, he was not sufficiently hardened in iniquity to be insensible. His mother's reproaches roused his indignation alike against her, and the principles in which she had educated him; and determined him to make some effort to assist himself; but, bereft of advice and assistance, his exertions proved fruitless: his estate was entailed--his debts numerous—and neither in his own family, nor among those on whom he had so lavishly squandered his wealth, could he find a single friend to step forward to his aid. His brother was abroad in the army; his sisters too selfish to interfere, even if they had had the power; and his mother so enraged, by the loss of the large sums she had expended to assist him in defrauding Sidney, that no maternal feeling of

affection or compassion could induce her to risk any thing farther. Thus, after educating him in a manner to lead him to destruction, the moment he had plunged into the abyss she left him to his fate.

Thus abandoned, his insolence and pride alike sunk in despair, and unable, at the age of three-and-twenty, to bear the prospect of wasting the bloom of his existence within the gloomy walls of a dungeon, deprived of the blessings of air and liberty, he at length wrote to Sidney, entreating she would use her influence with her husband to make some compromise with his creditors; and procure his liberation, to enable him to go abroad; saying, that as she was now in full possession of the property his mother's injustice had so long withheld from her, he trusted she would not refuse her assistance to so near a relation; he pleaded that his ill conduct to her had been instigated by his mother, who had abandoned him without remorse, to the horrors of a prison, to which her own ill management and improper conduct had conducted him.

Much affected by this letter, which breathcd

the very spirit of despair, Sidney shewed it to Sedley, who, feeling no less pity for this unfortunate victim of his mother's baseness and his own folly, determined if possible, to rescue him from destruction : and, hastening to Dublin for that purpose, made such judicious arrangements with Hamilton's creditors, that they consented to his liberation, on condition of his giving up the management of his estate into their hands ; and agreeing, after many difficulties and delays, to allow him 200*l.* per annum towards his future support.

Taking advantage of the alteration which distress and suffering had produced in Hamilton's sentiments, Major Sedley so strongly represented the necessity of future prudence and economy, so strenuously urged his endeavouring to retrieve the character and property he had alike injured, that Hamilton at length declared his resolution of being guided wholly by his advice. On Sedley's offering to procure him a commission in a regiment under orders for foreign service, to detach him at once from the dissolute companions who had destroyed him, he agreed, though reluctantly, to the proposal ; and

with his assistance procuring the necessary equipments, he embarked for the Continent without even seeing his mother.

Mrs. Hamilton's wrath, on hearing of her son's application to Sidney, exceeded any she had before experienced ; which, together with the fury of disappointed avarice and revenge, preying on a temper naturally violent, rendered her as odious to her own family as she had long been to the world in general.

The unfortunate and misguided Lady Beau-champ experienced in the kindness and tenderness of her friends, and the advancing improvement of her child, all the happiness she was now capable of enjoying. The severity of misfortune had subdued the violence and malevolence of her temper ; and, sensible of the gratitude she owed for being rescued from utter destruction, she behaved with uniform gentleness and complacency. All her family treated her with attention and respect ; Charles, with ready kindness, alleviating all that could wound or harass her feelings : and though she could not forbear bitterly lamenting the misery and ruin in which she had wantonly

involved herself, nor could her mother help bewailing the blight of all her better hopes, yet each felt too conscious of what they owed to the kindness of Mr. Montague and Charles ever in their presence to utter a complaint. Fanny, taught the full value of her mother's affection by the sad reverse she had experienced, received and returned her tenderness with grateful attention; and, though her spirits were so completely broken, that she felt no farther wish to mix in society, and leaned with helpless docility on her father and brother for advice and protection; she was yet comparatively happier than if no misfortune had taught her to curb the perverseness of her disposition, and the wayward caprices which foolish indulgence had fostered.

A few months after Lady Beauchamp's returned to Relle Vue, Anna married Mr. Radcliffe with the full approbation of all her family, and thus in some degree compensated for the severe disappointment they had suffered in her sister.

Instead of leaving the kingdom, Sir Townly Beauchamp expended the money he had re-

ceived in the same riot and extravagance in which he had latterly lived, till his last guinea was dissipated ; when he left Dublin in disguise, and, taking refuge in a cottage on his estate, resided there in security on the money he was enabled to raise among his tenantry, by permitting them to cut down timber and otherwise injure the property ; devoting every shilling he could raise to the purchase of spirituous liquors, never sober except for the first hour or two after his waking in the morning ; thus promising a speedy succession to his infant son, and the enjoyment of her jointure to Lady Beauchamp ; as, of the thousand a year pin-money he had so liberally settled on her at their marriage, she never received a guinea, his creditors previous claims taking place of her's.

Sidney and Major Sedley, freed from the uneasiness inseparably attendant on a law-suit, in their mutual affection, in the playful frolics of a beloved child, in the constant society of the warm-hearted and affectionate Elmore, and the playful vivacity of the endearing Emma, enjoyed all the happiness this world

is capable of affording ; and, though not exempt from the casual ills that sometimes disturb the serenity of even the best tempers, and occasionally cloud the purest earthly felicity, with fervent gratitude they felt and acknowledged the peculiar happiness of their lot, and, by the constant exercise of every mild and benevolent virtue, sought to deserve a continuance of the blessings they enjoyed.

THE END.

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